

# Bitter Sweet

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PERSPECTIVES

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VOLUME FIVE, NUMBER FIVE



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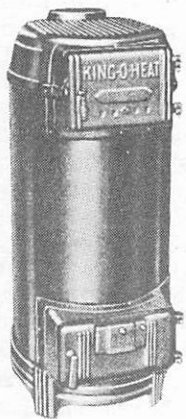
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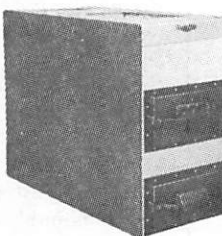


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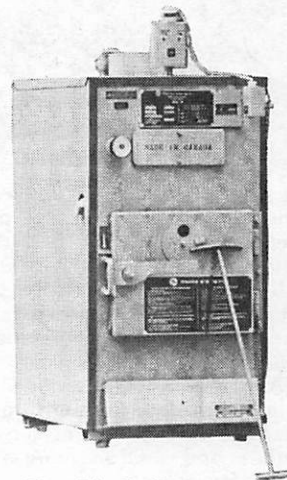
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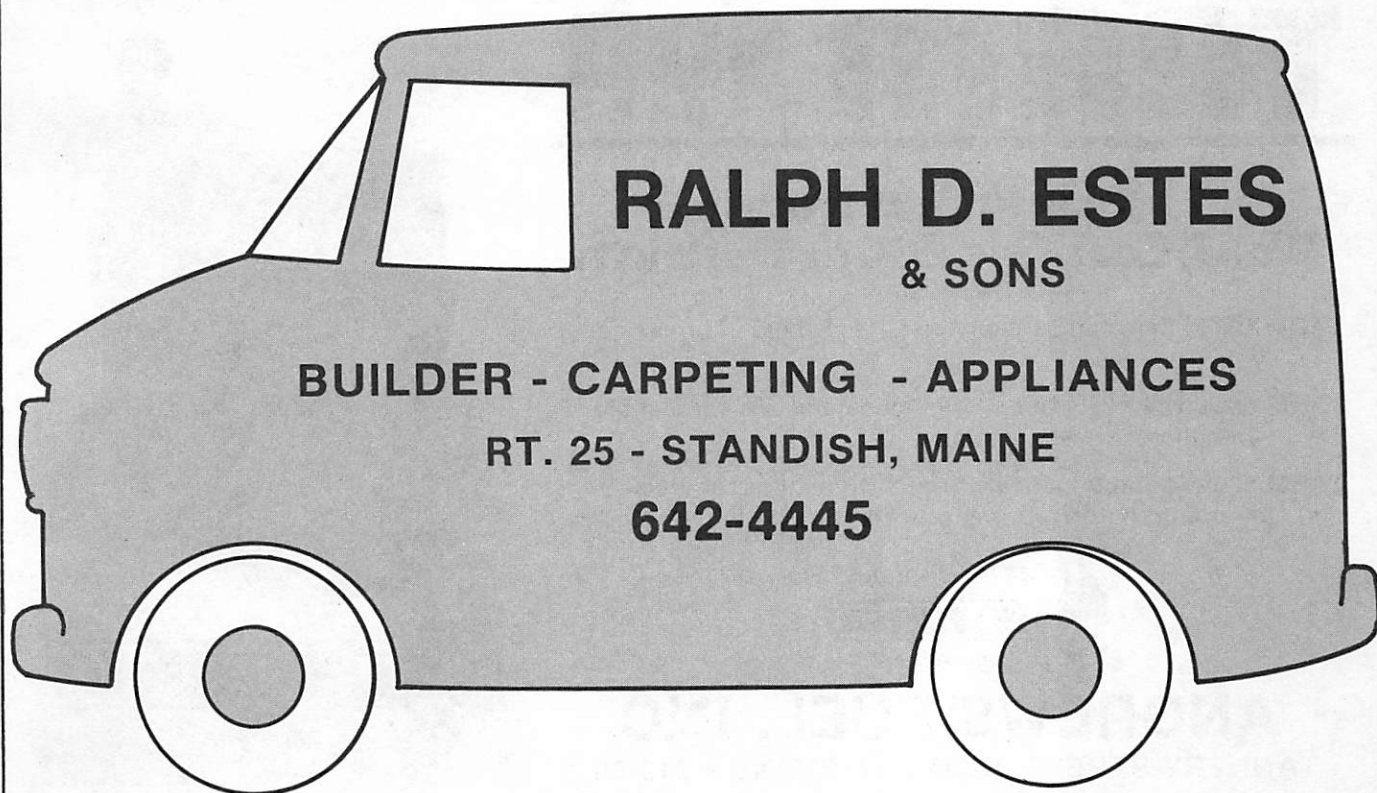
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## Bitter Sweet Views

We need to start this May issue with a couple of thank-you's inadvertently left out of past issues. The first thank-you should go to Norway Memorial Library, whose helpful staff will always try to find what one wants. They graciously loaned us the wonderful V. Akers photos of Mellie Dunham in our March issue.

In April we accidentally missed the credit for the illustrator featured in our fiction pages. She is Betsy Hanscom of South Windham and you'll see more of her work in future issues.

We really appreciate all of the writers who supply us with material; even though with such a small staff we cannot usually acknowledge receipt of it. Each month we try to balance old and new, fact and fiction, copy and illustrations, as well as geographical areas. More than any other material, we receive fiction and historical remembrances. All are carefully kept in our files, but it may take some time until you see a particular piece in print—and that is the way it is in the publishing business.

*Nancy Marcotte*

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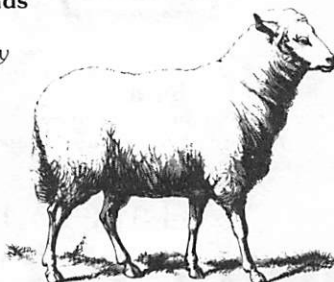
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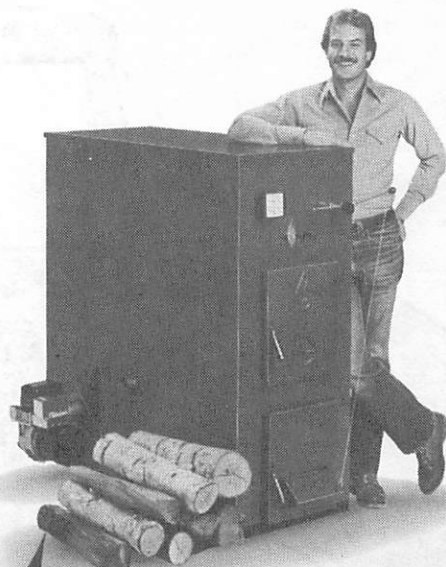
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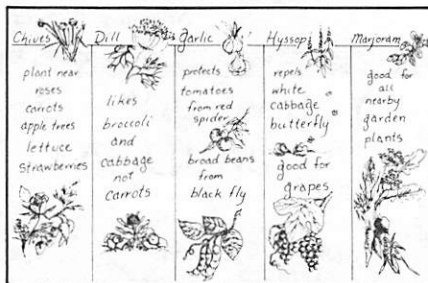
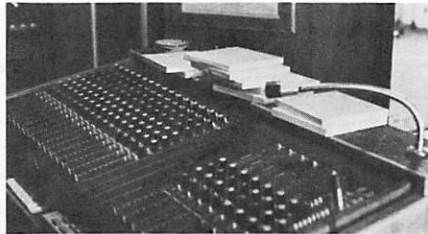
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## Cover Art

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letters  
 to the  
 editor

We welcome letters and print what  
 space allows.

### RENEWING MEMORIES

While reviewing my last year's commitments I note that it is time to renew my BitterSweet subscription. I enjoy every issue and think it's great you are keeping alive the memories of those who contributed so much to the area in "yester-years."

Gertrude T. Carroll  
 Saco

The article on Howard and Edna Shaw (April '81) brings back many pleasant memories since I was one of the gals who used to ride with them to dances all over the countryside.

Doris MacGown  
 Pittsfield

The picture in March BitterSweet is a house on the corner at North Bridgton called Lake House in 1873—sold to S. D. Meserve in 1902 and run under the name of The Songo—then sold in 1920 to a Mr. Wilbur and renamed the Wyonegonic—now owned by Bridgton Academy, I think.

Reta Meserve  
 North Waterford

P.S. Silas Meserve—my husband's grandfather—owned it for 18 years.

It was a lucky day for me indeed when I discovered your magazine.

Madeline Chicoine  
 Nokomis, Florida

Enclosed is a check . . . I am a charter member but possibly you don't honor that any more. If not, please let me know. You have had some very interesting articles lately.

Alma J. Dixon  
 Norway

**Ed. Note:** As a matter of fact, we do honor charter subscriptions. They cost one dollar less than regular subscriptions.

### QUESTIONING MEDICINE

Concerning the article in "Medicine For The Hills," March issue . . . The list of intimate questions representative of concerns of our young people certainly deserve answers. As "prospective mothers" the girls in this group don't seem to be informed at all, say nothing of a general sex education.

With so much false emphasis on the subject of sex in this country, our poor children are absolutely confused and afraid. How can they help but feel the pressures of immorality?

Generally speaking, most of us are well informed of this problem and I am wondering what the object was in printing the article? Hanging on to the principle of good taste, I am greatly disappointed to see this printed in your wonderful little magazine. These questions belong in a doctor's office.

A simple country person without the answers—

Susan Moulton  
 Hiram

**Ed. Note:** Well, we didn't have the answers, either. And we guess that is the point: we really should learn to understand our bodies to prevent all sorts of problems. We would teach our children what fire does, or how mechanical objects work. Why would we not also teach them why and how their greatest "machine" works? BitterSweet, as a public forum, could not deny this shocking fear and lack of knowledge. We don't think many people would dare ask their doctors or their parents about their fears and ignorances. Maybe now they will.

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## *Before The Hammer Falls On Portland's Other Landmarks . . .*

Portland was a growing commercial center during the early years of America's history. And into the 1800's it prospered as a shipping port for the wealth of the forests inland and the riches of the ocean at its doorstep. Then, with time, inevitably, its northern location began to hurt; and more centrally-located ports such as Boston and Baltimore gradually drew shipping away to the south.

The port had a brief resurgence during World War II when the great ship-building yards in South Portland brought jobs and people to the city. But by the 1950's and 60's, Portland's accumulated economic problems became all too visible in the landscape of the city.

As the port lost its vitality, it was largely abandoned—left to rats and a rising crime rate. The fine Federal and Greek Revival houses on the slopes above the harbor deteriorated and became substandard housing. It was a familiar pattern for smaller cities (and some not so small) that were not ideally located for the needs of modern 20th century life.

In the 1960's, however, Portland was the fortunate beneficiary of two trends, one from without and one from within. In that decade, people throughout the nation began to find life in the big urban centers less and less livable; and began seeking smaller places, such as Portland, as attractive alternatives to the megalopolis. Those who came to Portland brought with them fresh eyes for the qualities of the 19th century houses that were being allowed to fade away. And, instead of turning away in dismay from the old port area, they saw something with which they could work.

Within Portland those who felt old buildings, rather than being torn down, should be preserved and adapted to modern needs were given a powerful push to action by the demolition in 1961 of the fine old Union railway station—and its replacement by the dullest of possible shopping centers. (Never economically viable, this center now stands almost vacant.) These combined trends resulted in the organization of Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc. in 1964.



## GREATER PORTLAND LANDMARKS

### *Aims To Save Them*

*by Ann Munch*

Paula Craighead, Executive Director of Landmarks, describes the early years of the organization as "crisis-oriented"—attempts to rescue old buildings before the bulldozer got them. This desire to preserve old structures led to the formation of the revolving fund, started in 1967 by the donation of two derelict buildings to the organization. Landmarks sold

*Photo above: Union Station demolition, 1961. (Photo by Dan Johnson)*



*Union Station  
before its destruction*



these buildings with covenants binding the new owners to restore the exteriors in accordance with the original characters of the buildings, and to maintain these restorations. The money from these sales was then used to buy another vacant building.

In 1978 Landmarks raised a substantial sum in a major revolving fund campaign, and in the same year the city of Portland made funds available through its Historic Preservation Revolving Fund for the restoration of buildings purchased by Landmarks.

As a result of these efforts, eleven buildings have been bought and later sold under restrictive covenants. With each old building no one else wanted rescued and restored, Landmarks has demonstrated to the people of Portland that it is economically feasible to restore rather than replace old buildings.

Looking to the future, Paula Craighead says, "We need to look at what the needs of the community are now in relation to blighted buildings, and we may need to change the way we operate the revolving fund. I checked about a year ago with the city about statistics on demolition, and learned that the numbers were really high fifteen years ago, but have dropped off dramatically in the past few years. There just aren't that many buildings being demolished any more. Vacant buildings aren't sitting there on the market today because nobody will buy them. Now, people are looking for derelict buildings they can restore. Landmarks restored buildings early on; now private citizens are doing that kind of demonstration project. And every time someone restores a building, people are made more aware of the possibilities in other buildings.

"If there's a blighted vacant building out there that has the same qualities as 63 North Street (the most recent revolving fund project), we

would seriously look at buying and restoring it, but it seems to me the real need now in Portland is for front end money—the capital to make improvements.

"A couple of types of program come to mind. For example, a preservation group in a town in Texas subsidizes owners of wooden buildings in an effort to bring more awareness to frame buildings and their problems, and to counter the high-pressure sales techniques of artificial siding people. What that group does is make free paint available to owners of certain buildings.

"That's one type of program. Another is giving low interest loans in exchange for certain conditions about what is done with a building. We might use our money to add to a loan a bank is thinking of making, but which the bank doesn't want to make as large as the person applying for it needs. We would add to the loan because we want to see that extra nice job done to that building that's deserving.

"Or, in the case of a building that's going to be restored by a developer who is not aware of historical values, we could offer money to match a loan the developer wants from a bank. We could say: here's the money, it's low-interest, we don't want more money for our money. What we do want is for you to agree you will do X, Y, or Z; or, that we can see and approve your renovation plans.

"If Landmarks decides to use revolving fund money for short term loans of this nature, we would still be doing preservation work while meeting the needs of the community as they are today."

In addition to the revolving fund, a major thrust since the beginning of Landmark's existence has been the effort to get historic district ordinances for the city of Portland. As Ms. Craighead says, "It has been the organization's continuing battle.

Other cities in Maine have them, but Portland still doesn't."

Historic district ordinances are designed to make community life more attractive. These ordinances preserve architecturally important buildings, control what kind of changes may be made to exteriors, and influence what will replace unsound structures that do have to be torn down.

Patricia Anderson, President of Landmarks, says the effort to get historic district ordinances for Portland started in 1964, "... when a combination of things happened. One was the designation of National Historic Districts in Portland, which provided protection against demolition by any project using federal funds. This was absolutely no help for state or private projects, but was a great help in trying to get local historic district ordinances because the work of designating the districts had already been done.

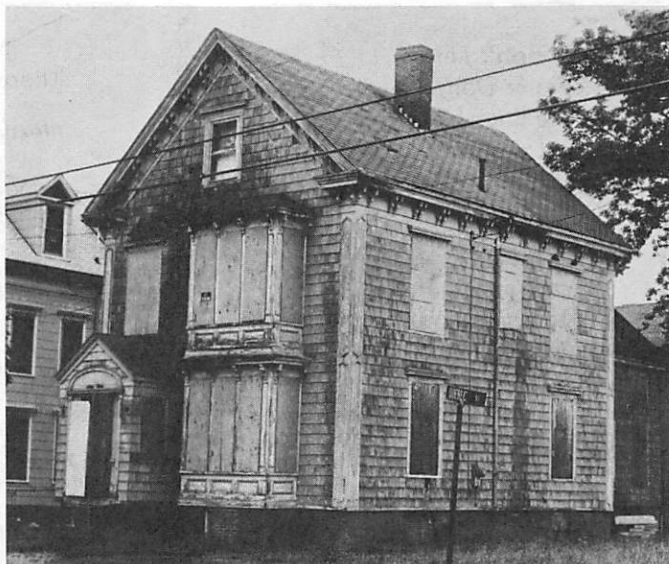
"At about the same time Portland became part of the federal Model Cities program. Because of the Model Cities money, the city had more funds and personnel to pay attention to historic values. Landmarks then worked very closely with the city planning department and with an outside consultant to produce a preservation planning report on particular sections of the Model Cities areas of Portland. This provided guidelines and incentive to the city in its own planning.

"During this first attempt to get historic district ordinances in Portland, Landmarks arranged meetings in each of the proposed districts, to give people an opportunity to voice their concerns. The meetings were not as well attended as you might have expected—for some people it was not a hot issue. If more people had come to the meetings and gotten more enthusiastic, perhaps there would have been more demand in city hall for historic district ordinances at that time.

"In some municipalities, historic district ordinances have taken the form of a supervisory or regulatory body in city hall. In Portland there was a great deal of skittishness about creating yet another regulatory body. Who is it responsible to, what power should it have? All those worries. Plus the added worries of property owners resenting the notion that anyone can tell them what they ought to do. Those are perennial problems.



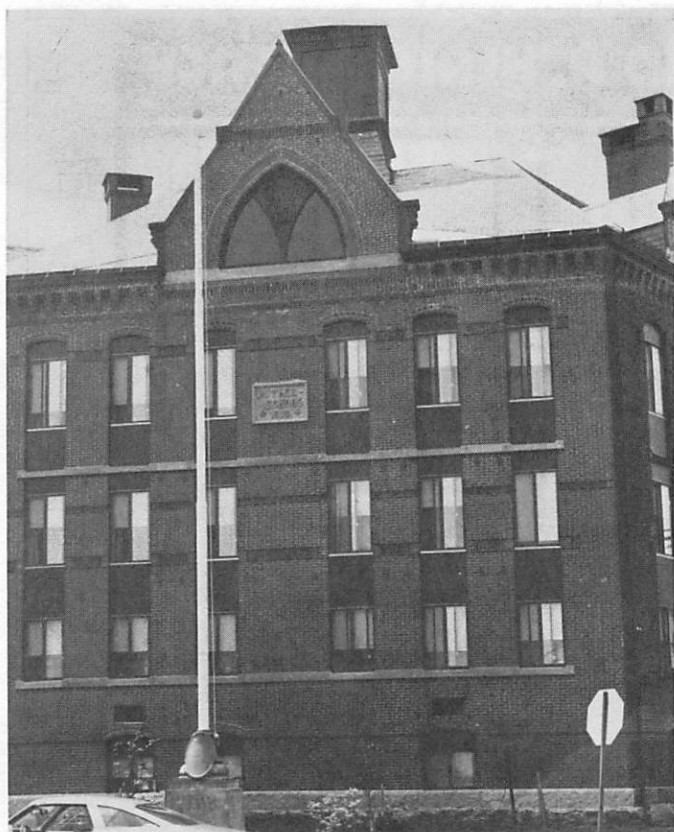
*Top right: 63 North Street before exterior renovation by the Revolving Fund. Top left: 63 North Street after restoration. (Photo by Judy Nicoleau.) Below right: Butler School, candidate for a parking lot, March, 1975. (Photo by Mary Eliza Wengren.) Below left: Butler School as elderly housing. (Photo by Alfred Donovan.)*



"Trying to get historic district ordinances is an ongoing process. Recently, there has been a lot of new interest and city hall is taking the lead. The city would like to have a mechanism for promoting the new federal tax incentives for the people of Portland. Landmarks is now going over its original proposals and making some changes. We hope this will go to the planning board to be incorporated into their presentation to city council. In general, city halls are responsive to people and to current issues.

"Landmarks works for historic district ordinances because such ordinances would create, by surveying the architecture of districts and knowing what exists there now, the possibility of maintaining the best possible current flavor of neighborhoods. They are not aimed at antiquing everything, but rather to enhance the best features of areas. Not allow overcrowding, not allow thoughtless treatment of exteriors. Create some standards of quality for the maintenance of private properties in the area as a whole. It also has the added benefit of creating a very specific identity for areas—a neighborhood sense to relate to."

**Continued Next Month**





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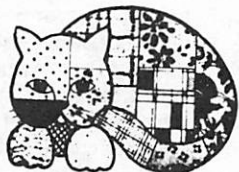
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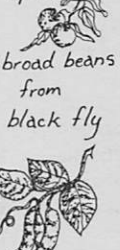
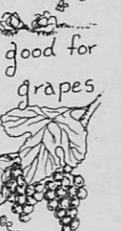












743-6319

Glenn E. Chute

# Companion Planting With Herbs

by Cynthia Baker

<p><i>Basil</i></p> <p>grow near tomatoes asparagus sweet pepper</p> 	<p><i>Beebalm</i></p> <p>improves flavor and growth of tomatoes</p> 	<p><i>Borage</i></p> <p>place along strawberry beds in orchards</p> 	<p><i>Chamomile</i></p> <p>likes broccoli and cabbage</p> 	<p><i>Chives</i></p> <p>plant near roses carrots apple trees lettuce strawberries</p> 	<p><i>Dill</i></p> <p>likes broccoli and cabbage not carrots</p> 	<p><i>Garlic</i></p> <p>protects tomatoes from red spider broad beans from black fly</p> 	<p><i>Hyssop</i></p> <p>repels white cabbage butterfly good for grapes</p> 	<p><i>Marjoram</i></p> <p>good for all nearby garden plants</p> 
<p><i>Mint</i></p> <p>likes beans and broccoli—deters flea beetles on tomatoes turnip radish</p> 	<p><i>Onion</i></p> <p>likes cabbage family strawberries beets tomatoes spinach lettuce beans not peas</p> 	<p><i>Parsley</i></p> <p>likes to be near asparagus</p> 	<p><i>Rosemary</i></p> <p>repels carrot fly and likes broccoli</p> 	<p><i>Sage</i></p> <p>improves flavor of cabbage repels white cabbage butterfly and carrot fly doesn't like cucumbers</p> 	<p><i>Summer Savory</i></p> <p>plant near beans to keep away bean beetles</p> 	<p><i>Tansy</i></p> <p>helps keep away ants, flies and boring insects in orchards, near roses, raspberries, grapes</p> 	<p><i>Thyme</i></p> <p>keeps away white cabbage butterfly and loves the whole garden</p> 	<p><i>Wormwood</i></p> <p>repels white cabbage butterfly and flea beetles on eggplant tomatoe turnip radish</p> 

Last season's garden was a delight to the senses. As I went down to cut a head of cabbage, the fresh, penetrating aroma of mint never failed to clear my mind. Hyssop sent a musky greeting from its sentry point between the cabbage and broccoli, its short green leaves on upright stems looking every bit like snappy soldiers on watch for white cabbage butterflies. Huge borage plants, covered with prickly hairs, kept crawling critters away from my strawberries. I avoided them myself, when bare-legged, but their sky blue starry flowers were a feast to the eye—reminiscent of a delicate medieval tapestry. Lemon yellow calendulas and orange marigolds peeped jauntily from the squash bed. Purple chive blossoms kept a close watch over the lettuce and carrots.

What were all these herbs doing in the middle of my vegetable garden?

Making it difficult to reach the vegetables, causing concerned head-shaking among family members who couldn't see the order in my disorder, and offering opportunity for conversations with wondering neighbors who couldn't see the good in planting what they "can't eat."

But herbs have been of invaluable service to humankind for centuries, as food, medicine, seasoning, and for their aromatic qualities. Shouldn't they do as well for their own kind, through companion planting?

Remember Grandpa's garden? He may have planted pole beans and pumpkins in the corn patch. The pole beans grew nicely up the cornstalks; and the pumpkins, as well as cucumbers and winter squash, helped keep the raccoons out of the corn. Centuries before Grandpa's ancestors set foot on American soil, the native

Americans had grown these plants together for best results. This sort of companion planting arose through observation,

Two of my neighbors who have a particularly bountiful garden, noticed the opposite effect of companion planting. They had never given a thought to planting certain plants near their "friends" until they noticed the diminishing size of the potato plants closest to the sunflowers. Too little hen dressing (not the sort for Thanksgiving consumption) perhaps? Hardly! Those two plants don't get along at all. Sunflowers inhibit potato growth; pole beans can't compete with them for light or space. Sunflower lovers shouldn't despair, however, as corn enjoys their company and cucumbers like their shade. Just feed them with plenty of nutrients, as they reach for the rays they emulate so well.



Last winter as I dreamily studied the latest seed catalogues, I resolved to discover which herbs do best in the vegetable garden. Some catalogues provided tips on companion planting, but I had not found a concise guide. After months of begging all manner of seed catalogues from friends and borrowing every available herb book, I compiled enough information to plan a chart of eighteen most commonly available herbs, showing where to place them in the garden for the best results.

With my completed herb chart in hand, I set out to the garden to correct my mistakes and to add new herbs to the confusion. Before I would advise anyone else to do likewise, there is a problem to consider.

Many of these herbs are perennials, and should be placed near other perennials. Otherwise, if one is a "plow up the whole plot" planter, as opposed to being more of the intensive gardener, what happens to the precious, particular, and sometimes expensive herbs? There are two methods of dealing with this problem.

The first, least effective, and most embarrassing if the neighbors should be about, is called the "save my herbs" dance. It commences at the sound of the tractor coming up the road on its annual trip to till my garden. I jog to the garden, wave my arms up and down vigorously, and point here and there, while hopping—first on one leg, then on the other—shouting "watch out for the tansy," and "those are my Egyptian onions," and other top ten garden hits of spontaneous creation. Picking out the mutilated herb roots and transplanting them is one result of this method; assuring that one will have to hire a different tiller next year is another.



More effective, and less dramatic, is the second method. Where I must have the garden tilled, I plant annual herbs next to their respective companions, such as: sweet basil with tomatoes, dill next to broccoli and cabbage, onions between beets and spinach, and summer savory with beans. Taste buds are a key to this simple plan, as each herb compliments its companion at the dinner table, also.

Perennials are kept at the edge of the plowed area, with their own herb companions left undisturbed from year to year. Parsley, a biennial which often reseeds itself, can be planted in a row next to the asparagus bed. If the asparagus is next to the tilled area, plant tomatoes and basil, as they all three like each other. Tomatoes help discourage asparagus beetles due to their solanine content, and basil planted in a row parallel to the tomatoes will protect them from many insects.

Borage is essentially an annual, but its prolific reseeding habit can make it a nuisance in the tillable garden. Plant it in the strawberry bed, as well as the orchard. It releases calcium, organic potassium, and other

minerals into the soil, and attracts honeybees.

Many herbs attract bees as well as repel harmful insects. I have noticed much more pollination activity in my garden since I have planted more herbs. Bees love thyme, hyssop, mint, and chive blossoms. Old-fashioned bee balm is a beautiful, stately plant to place in clumps anywhere you have room. All of these herbs also repel white cabbage butterfly, so plant them in your cabbage and broccoli beds, but remember that they are perennials.

Tansy, which is one of my favorite herbs, is large, with graceful, feathery, spicy-scented leaves. Plant it at the edge of the garden near your beans. It repels flying insects and ants. Grandma planted it outside her kitchen door for this purpose, but sometimes a sprig or two brought to the kitchen shelf is more convincing.

Wormwood (*artemisia absinthium*) attracts small wasps, which are beneficial predators in the vegetable garden. Silvery members of the artemisia family make a lovely border for any garden. Plant them where they can be left undisturbed, with a few eggplant or tomato plants interplanted to keep black fly beetles from visiting.

One valuable herb not listed in my chart, but used extensively in my garden, is the marigold. The marigold family emits a chemical from their roots which, over a period of time, kill nematodes (parasitic worms) in the soil. Plant them year after year to obtain best results. Intersperse them with bean plants to keep down Mexican bean beetles. Old-fashioned strong-smelling varieties are a treat in rice mixtures, soups and omelets, and cheaper than saffron.

Dig up a few of your kitchen herbs and place them in your vegetable garden. Trade with neighbors to enlarge your herb collection, or visit a local grower. People who love herbs love to talk about them, and treat them as the loyal friends of the plant world that they are.

You will enjoy your gardening experience even more as you broaden your knowledge of herbs—and your super herb-protected vegetables will taste better when you sprinkle some of these magic herbs on them!

*Cynthia Baker, who also illustrated this article, writes from her home in Bolsters Mills.*

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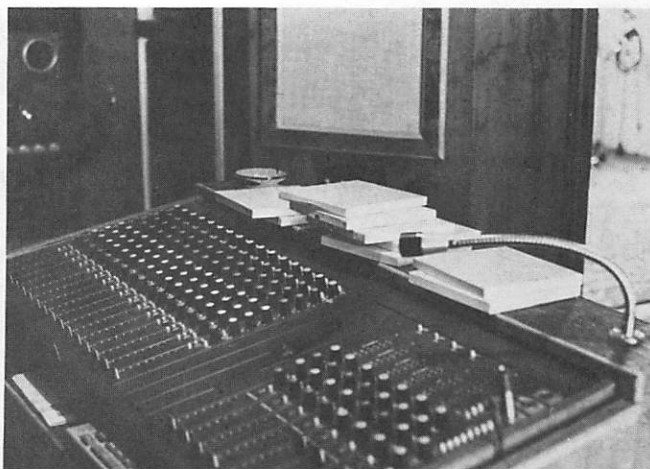
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*Just before press time we heard from the St. Pierres that they are about to add 16-track recording capabilities.*



## **Ted & Connie St. Pierre** **the outlook**

### **a recording studio in bethel's hinterlands**

The big farmhouse has stood for many years at the foot of Mt. Will near Sunday River in Bethel, its three chimneys, big barn, many bedrooms, and large ell attesting to its sturdy appropriateness for the rugged life of a farm family. In the 1880's, calls to breakfast, stamping of livestock, and the ring of axe to tree were familiar echoes.

But for any undiscovered ghosts of farmers' sons and daughters long gone, the beams of the old farm house reverberate with surprising new sounds in the 1980's: the rock music of the Blend, or New Wave sounds of Boston bands, or avant-garde poetry of someone named "Emily XYZ."

Ted and Connie St. Pierre have been the residents of this structure for the past year, and where once the hobnails trod, finer boots now stomp out the time for music accompanied by bass guitar, drum, or electronic synthesizer.

"The Outlook," as the old-timers named their lofty perch overlooking the mountains, is a recording studio as modern and sophisticated as the Electro-Acoustics Systems they once operated in Boston. Only this one has a certain dash of rustic Maine atmosphere thrown in for good measure.

The studio was once a large parlor-

type room with windows on three sides, white plaster, and dark beams. It still is, with the current remarkable addition of various instruments, microphone plugs, and lovely Oriental-style rugs for soft acoustics. Just off this room is the glassed-in "booth" full of their multi-track stereo taping equipment and a control panel capable of "mixing" many separate instrumental and vocal tracks into one re-recorded tape. This room is panelled with 100-year-old wide boards found in the barn.

Ted is an acknowledged master of his electronic field, having recorded many musicians for long-playing albums and 45's during his two and a half years in the Boston business. He's also a fine musician himself, who attended Berklee School of Music and plays back-up bass guitar or drums on some records. He has been 10 years off and on in the field of record engineering and once was the service technician at the company which makes the electronic synthesizer.

Connie credits her husband with the real creative genius for that fantastic electronic instrument which simulates all sorts of other sounds, but she operates it, too. In addition, Connie St. Pierre is a writer, a poet, and a classically-trained

musician on piano and flute. Her vocals back up some musicians as well.

The St. Pierres left Boston because of high rental overhead and came to Maine where they saw the recording business as a virtually untapped market (There is one studio in Lewiston and one further up the coast.)

Ted had been a student at Gould Academy in 1970, so he was familiar with the Bethel area. In addition to Maine performers, which they have found, they hoped their Boston clients would follow them here for quality recording work.

And they have—the deal is hard to beat. In addition to lower recording rates and free set-up time, the Outlook also offers accommodations for those groups and 13 acres of Maine woods and fields.

"Usually," Ted says, "You can only get a studio (in the city) for a couple of hours at a time. Here it's more relaxed. We don't charge them for set-up time, just the time they're actually recording. Musicians don't want to be under that kind of pressure; it's hard to create . . ."

Most weekends are full with out-of-state bookings: set-up time is often Friday night, with all-day Saturday for taping the basic sound-tracks that go into a record.





*Above: Ted St. Pierre at the control board*

Ted explains how the usual group is taped—first the drums, bass and rhythm guitar; then other instruments and vocalists later. This is so the vocalist can concentrate on just the singing, and so there is no “leakage” of sound between separate instruments.

Putting it all together is the magic. How much echo? How much reverb? How loud the percussion? The groups who come there can tell Ted what they want, and his knowledge will provide it. But—“If they want to control it, I let them,” he says. Some know exactly the mix they want.

Ted tapes for different systems and tests it on small speakers, like those of a radio. If it sounds good there, it will sound good on the larger, more expensive systems.

Part of the young intelligentsia going back to the land, Connie and Ted heat their building with wood—shutting off all but the charming self-contained ell where they live when no visitors are there. They also garden to provide the meals they serve their guests.

They are delighted with the benefits of recording in Bethel. In Boston the music was all New Wave rock. Here it is a wide variety.

“I’ll record anything,” Ted smiles. And he has recorded all sorts of things from four and five-piece bands to solitary singer-songwriters or poets.



*Below: Connie at the synthesizer*

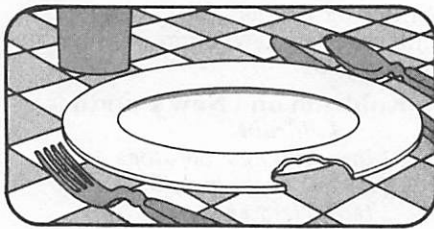


At last year’s Mollycoddle Days Music Festival, the Bethel Rotary Club offered as first and second prizes the cost of the tape and the community-minded St. Pierres gave the recording time for the winners. As a result, they have tapes of a local rock-and-roll band and of Jerry Evans, a country musician who accompanies himself on guitar.

Many musicians want just a demo tape to play for radio stations or prospective record producers. But times are tough everywhere, and a stringent economy has forced major companies to refrain from signing new performers. So, the independent pressing and distribution of records is the only way for new talent to be heard. The Outlook always provides tapes of a high enough quality for this purpose.

Sitting in this converted farm house where there is this marvellous juxtaposition of bark on the beams and a synthesizer in the corner makes it abundantly clear why The Outlook is such an appealing alternative to city studios. Only three hours away, it’s one-third the price and twice the expertise, with a restful vacation into the bargain. The sociable hospitality of the young couple make one wish she had something to record.

Plenty of local people *do* have something to record. The day we were there, humorist Joe Perham was scheduled to be taped “in concert,” as it were, with a small audience of listeners in the colonial sound studio. We figure any left-over ghosts would feel right at home that night. *N.M.*



## Food For Thought by Lucia Owen

### TAKING CHANCES

Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by these seeds of Stokes. And of Harris, Page, Vesey, Johnny, and Burpee, not to mention all the others whose catalogues litter my desk. There is no better job for a miserably cold snowy day than carefully leafing in seed catalogues. The snow plow grinding by makes me settle deeper in the chair and transplants my thoughts to spring.

Since the joy of growing something is directly proportional to the joy of eating it, we keep a place in the vegetable garden especially for experimenting. Here the new (to us), the curious, and the unlikely can flourish happily. Keeping such a plot prevents the cook from slipping into a routine and provides the chance for innovation and surprise. Faced with a hill of kuta squash, we either have to invent wildly or do additional research. Both are healthy for inner and outer man.

Enthusiasm and experimentation, however, have their pitfalls, and we must counsel moderation. Last year I planted two hills of spaghetti squash while visions of pounds melting away danced in my head. Obviously, more is better. The vines leapt across into the corn patch and up the stalks, so that we harvested the squash like

grapes. Now there are thirty-five of the critters in the basement waiting for dishes I will never use them for, like turkey tetrazzini. They do, however, make fine Christmas presents.

Occasionally, ignorance is some excuse, as I found out the first time I grew cosmos. They grew into a hedge over six feet tall, overwhelming two broccolis and three rows of lettuce. Even though he requested the cosmos, my husband still finds my preference for the spectacular amusingly un-Yankee. Hyperbole keeps rearing its ugly head, even in the garden.

Having issued stern warning, I can move on to the matter at hand—planting two or this or a handful of that because, not only do these crops add variety to the garden, but they add dimension to cooking and eating. Since we are what we eat, we might as well eat interesting, even unique things. It can't hurt, and dimension be damned. Just flipping through a seed catalogue or a big cookbook ought to send shivers of delight up one's trowel arm.

Over the years we have tried a number of crops with some results worth passing on. Salsify, or oyster plant, apparently grew in profusion on farms in Maine a generation ago, but one doesn't see it frequently now. It looks like a dark brown or black parsnip. The tops are carrotty and produce gorgeous, fragile, purple, thistly blossoms. The crop I planted self-seeded and lasted for about three years. The seeds individually are beautiful, like dandelion crossed with milkweed. The salsify itself can be just boiled. The only problem I had was keeping the roots white after they were peeled. The flavor is light and lemony. All we needed was one or two meals from the salsify bed to make us

feel smug about being original.

Attempts at originality must be made in the face of adversity and public opinion if this aspect of gardening is to succeed. Consider kale for a moment. For most, that's all the time it deserves; and for a long time, we were of the same persuasion. Then a Dutch friend fed us kale hotchpotch. (The real Dutch name escapes me.) We were converted. The dish is a combination of kale, potatoes, and ham or a sausage like kielbasa boiled together first. The potatoes and kale are smashed together and mixed with some of the cooking liquid and sliced sausage. The meal defies superlatives if you eat it about twice a winter. Nothing in excess, especially where kale is concerned.

Kale will stand frost, snow, and nearly every other kind of abuse that nature can dish out. The same Dutch friend digs his kale out from under the snow in December or January, puts it in a plastic bag, and jumps on it. Saves a lot of chopping. Because kale hotchpotch thus provides entertainment as well as nourishment, we plant a few feet of row each year.

Tied with Brussels sprouts for wierdest-looking vegetable in the garden is kohlrabi. It is also interesting because it is murder to spell. The "h" offers the creative speller versions like *kholrabi*, *kolrahbi*, or even *kohlhrabbi*, all of which produce the same sound. Kohlrabi, with the "h" safely placed, looks prehistoric. Perhaps it is a turnip that tried to root and then decided to be a cabbage instead. I always grow about four plants a summer just to make one special dish, kohlrabi and new potatoes. At that rate the seed packet should last about a hundred years. Considering the price of pleasure these days, my kohlrabi seeds are pearls.

### SILHOUETTE

black gnarled scrawls  
maple fingers  
claw the sky  
  
frosty breath and  
hands in pockets  
numb boots kicking driveway gravel  
wood smoke clouds spice the air  
  
River, moon-mirror  
through ominous shadows  
soon will be hard frozen.

### VIEW FROM THE WINDOW

Pulsating pines dance green  
against blue clouds  
three ravens soar higher  
as Winter gasps swirl flurries  
the scene changes

Connie St. Pierre  
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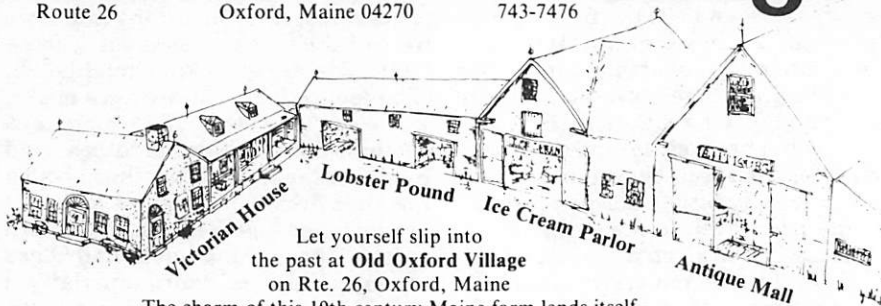


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chill in the air, few things improve the  
climate like:

### Kohlrabi and New Potatoes

1 lb. kohlrabi

1 lb. small new potatoes

2-2 1/2 c. bechamel sauce

1 tsp. celery seed

1 tsp. caraway seed

1/4 cup grated sharp cheddar  
cheese

4-6 slices bacon

Trim and peel and thinly slice the  
kohlrabi. Boil it until just tender—  
about 15 minutes. Drain it and put it  
in a large bowl. Boil the potatoes until  
they are just tender, too—about 20  
minutes. Drain, peel, and add to the  
bowl. If they are large, slice them.  
Add the bechamel, celery seed and  
caraway to the potatoes and kohlrabi.  
(In the interest of space, there is no  
recipe here for the bechamel. It should  
be a fairly basic item in the repertoire.)

Pour the mixture into a shallow  
baking dish, buttered. (1 1/2 qt. size.)  
Sprinkle the cheese on top, then put  
on the bacon slices. For less fat in the  
finished product, cook the bacon par-  
tially first and reduce the cooking  
temperature to about 375°. If the bacon  
isn't precooked, put the casserole into  
a hot (450°) oven and cook it until the  
bacon crisps—about 20 minutes.

This dish is perfect when the smal-  
lest bite of winter is in the air and  
makes the backs of our necks feel the  
distant hint of seasonal change.

Cast caution to the winds, there-  
fore, when you plant your garden this  
spring. Cast a few odd seeds to the  
wind as well, and reap imagination  
and uniqueness in the kitchen.

### SPRING NIGHT

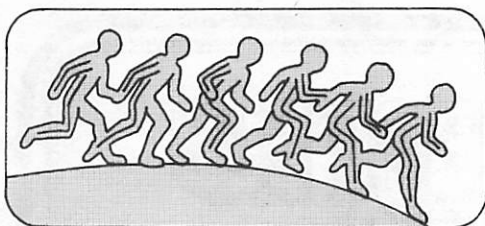
It rains  
the winds of early spring  
are blowing away the icy air  
of winter

Snow melts  
off the trees  
leaving them black and stark  
against an iridescent gray sky

Ice melts  
it runs in rivulets down streets  
and pours into drainpipes  
snowbanks wither

Gusts of wind  
run over me and through me  
and the coldness of winter melts  
inside of me.

Nancy J. Dalot  
Gardiner



# Medicine For The Hills

by

Michael A. Lacombe, M.D.

## MENINGITIS

Meningitis is a frightening diagnosis, suggesting epidemics, brain damage, mental retardation, sudden death. The purpose of this article is to define meningitis and improve understanding about the disease so that it may be suspected early in its course. Meningitis is an infection of the coverings of the brain, the *arachnoid*, the *pia mater*, and the *cerebrospinal fluid*. The brain tissue itself is not infected in pure meningitis; only if the infection does extend to the brain, which it rarely may, do we term the disease *meningoencephalitis* or *encephalitis*. In this article we shall be talking about infections of the meninges and the cerebrospinal fluid alone and will, therefore, not concern ourselves with encephalitis.

Infections of the meninges may be caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi, or by the tubercle bacillus which causes tuberculosis. Of the various infecting agents, meningitis most often results from viral or bacterial infection. We shall be discussing here *bacterial (pyogenic) meningitis* and *viral (aseptic) meningitis*. At Stephens Memorial Hospital, where we see several cases of viral and bacterial meningitis each year, we have not seen a case of tuberculous or fungal meningitis in the past ten years.

### Bacterial Meningitis

The three most common bacteria causing meningitis are *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (the pneumococcus), *Neisseria meningitidis* (meningococcus), and *Hemophilus influenzae*. These account for about three-fourths of all the bacterial infections of the meninges. The relative frequencies of infections by these bacteria are related to the age of the patient. In a newborn baby, infections of the meninges by the above-mentioned three organisms are very uncommon; the offending organism is most often a bacterium from the gut (so-called enteric bacteria) such as *E. coli*, *pseudomas*, and Group D *Streptococcus*. In children from one month to fifteen years of

age, *H. influenzae* and *Neisseria meningitidis* are the most common frequent causes of bacterial meningitis. In adults, *Neisseria meningitidis* and *S. pneumoniae* are responsible for most cases of meningitis. Of all the organisms mentioned, *N. meningitidis* (meningococcus) is the only type of bacteria which occurs in epidemic form. It is classically described as occurring among military recruits who are often found in the close contact necessary for contagion of the meningococcus, housed in barracks in close proximity. About a quarter of patients found to have pneumococcal meningitis will have had an antecedent illness with pneumonia or an ear infection. About ten per cent of patients with pneumococcal meningitis will have had a history of recent or remote significant head injury through which the pneumococcus gains access to the meninges and the cerebrospinal fluid. Alcoholism is another predisposing illness which may give rise to pneumococcal meningitis.

Meningitis from *Hemophilus influenzae* almost always occurs in children under five years of age. Indeed, the majority of all cases of meningitis seen at Stephens in the past ten years have been in children and have, it is important to mention, *been uniformly properly managed by our two pediatricians*.

The bacteria reach the meninges by several routes. They may arrive in the brain coverings from blood infection, from the upper-respiratory tract or skin through some defect in the barrier—a defect such as a skull fracture—or spread from the nose and throat through veins in the meninges, or spread directly from extension of infection of a sinus or an ear. Most commonly, the infection spreads from a blood-borne infection, which in turn arises from a pneumonia or upper-respiratory tract infection or, more rarely, from a gastrointestinal or urinary tract infection.

Common to most types of meningitis is an acute onset of fever, headache, vomiting, and stiff neck. This constellation of symptoms should alert any parent or doctor to the possibility of meningitis. In addition, the majority of patients will also have a history of a preceding upper-respiratory tract infection, ear infection, or pneumonia. The illness progresses rapidly, with the development of confusion, obtundation, and lack of consciousness. The physician looks for the classical physical findings of meningitis: drowsiness and decreased mentation, stiff neck, and an unwillingness on the part of the patient to allow stretching of the spinal column because of the extreme pain so produced. The presence of a rash together with symptoms of meningitis should alert the physician to possible infection from *N. meningitidis* (meningococcus). This is an important distinction, because of reasons to be mentioned next month. The prompt and proper treatment of bacterial meningitis results in rapid recovery.

**Continued Next Month**



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**“Isn’t it odd,” said the tall, nice-looking man to Candace, “that we should each have a Great-Aunt Minnie who owned such a figurine?”**

# BILLIKEN

*Fiction by Otta Louise Chase*

There he sat in a secluded corner of the antique shop window. His vacuous grin and slanted eyes were exactly as she remembered them, but where was his royal seat? All gods should have a throne on which to sit. The Billiken who once reigned over her great-aunt Minnie’s mantle had one with words engraved around the base. She looked longingly at the little statue and wished she could afford to buy it. It was supposed to be a good luck charm and no one needed one more than she.

Aunt Minnie’s Billiken was a small plaster statuette similar to a Kewpie-doll, fat with a pointed head. He wore no clothing. With his chubby legs held straight before him, he was seated on a throne-like dais with a pointed Gothic back—a separate piece with two steps around the base. On the top riser was his name and around the bottom riser ran a legend. Set into the back of the throne was a copper medallion bearing his name, the name and address of the firm who manufactured him, and the patent date. These little ornaments, along with other kinds of plaster statuary, had been very popular in the late eighteenthundreds and early nineteenthundreds.

Candace Wright had come to the city some time before, thinking, like so many talented and lovely girls, that she would immediately find a place in the entertainment world. For

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MARTIN

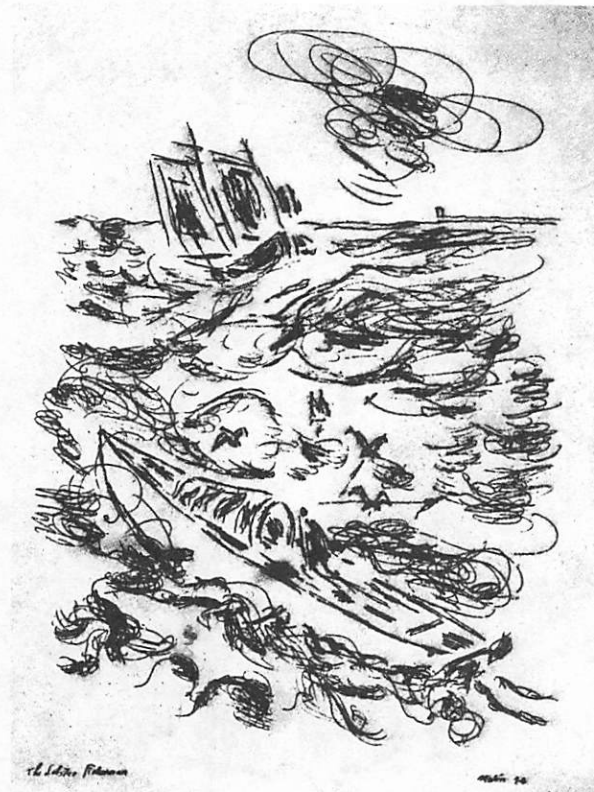
# MAINESE IN A

*"lyrical, often ecstatic fr*

JOHN  
(1870



*From Flint Island, watercolor, 15" x 20"*  
(Photo courtesy Barridoff Galleries, Portland, Maine)



*Lobster Fisherman, 1948—copper plate etching*

No American artist since Winslow Homer painted the environs of seacoast Maine in a style as uniquely personal and dynamic as John Marin. His technique was as widely separated from Homer's as the seven seas. Homer in his clear-eyed and traditional way painted what was there; Marin responded to some inner vision that expressed his intense emotion in distorted natural forms and vibrant color freely rendered.

He was enchanted by movement on a grand scale—the soaring lines of a Manhattan skyscraper, the breathless sweep of a great bridge upward, the jumbled rhythms of clapboard houses set between pine and rock outcroppings, the tumultuous heavings of sea and sail—these caught his eye and heart. Obedient to that inner eye, he set them down with lyrical, often ecstatic freshness and vigor.

Marin came to painting through the torment typical of so many creative people misdirected in their early years. He studied engineering, worked in a wholesale notions house, tried architecture. He finally enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, shifted to the Art Students League in New York, and then went on to Paris in 1905. He studied in various *ateliers* there, concentrating on the craft of etching, and exhibited ten

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shness and vigor . . .”

MARIN  
1953)

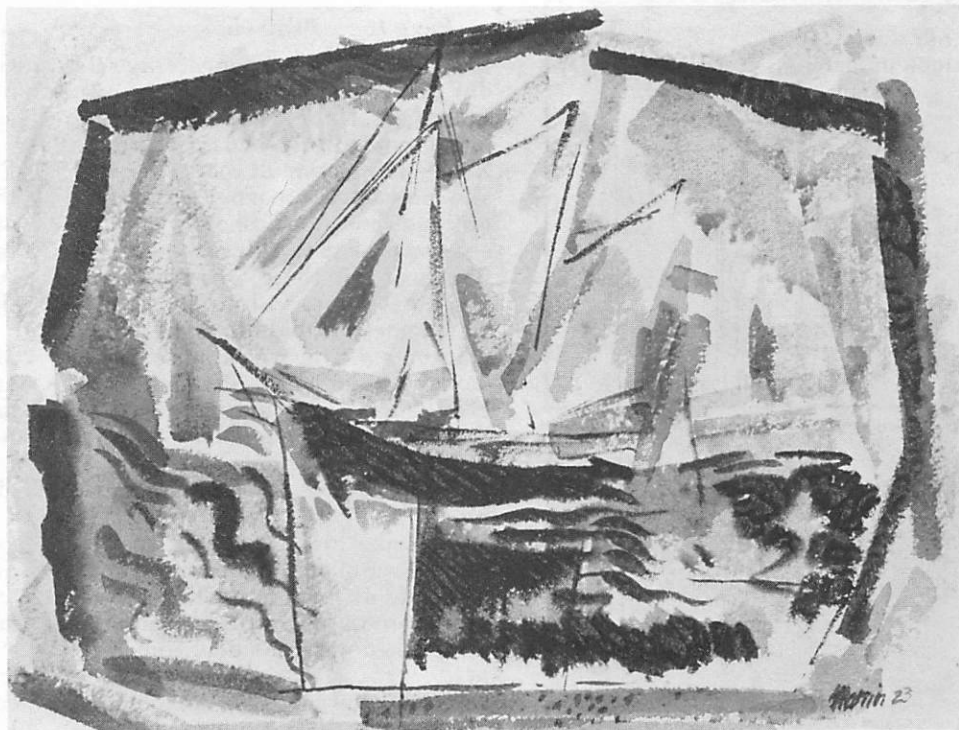
etchings in the Salon d’Automne in 1910. He was back in the United States in time to exhibit in the famed New York Armory Show of 1913. He never left the States after that.

His mentor and guiding spirit in those struggling years was Alfred Stieglitz, founder of the “291” gallery on Fifth Avenue. The friendship/partnership lasted a lifetime. (Stieglitz died in 1946) and gave Marin the freedom he sorely needed to work wherever and however the spirit moved him.

It moved him to Maine, from where he wrote to Stieglitz, once in 1923: “This day is a peach, clear and snappy . . . indescribable brilliancy. The boats dance. Everything is dancing . . .”

His creativity found expression in several media, including oil, graphic art, and literature; but it is through his watercolors that Marin’s name will endure in the mainstream of American art. His work is in collections of major museums and galleries in Maine and throughout the world. His studio at Cape Split near Addison is still intact and under the supervision of the late artist’s son and daughter-in-law, John, Jr. and Norma Marin.

*Martin Dibner, a long-time resident of Casco, has just completed work on his latest novel—this one about the art world.*



*Sailboat, watercolor, 1923, 11" x 15-1/8"*  
(Photo courtesy Kennedy Galleries, Inc., New York)



*Portrait Of John Marin, Jr., 1942—copper plate etching*



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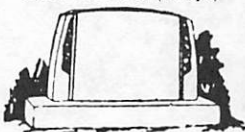
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... Page 15 Billiken

her this had not happened. Day after day she went the rounds of the casting offices. Her hopes soared, only to be subsequently dashed to the ground. As she left her small room each day, she passed the corner where the antique shop stood. She always pressed her nose to the glass to see if Billiken was still there. Often she whispered her hopes to him and, on the way home, she told him of her disappointments. This was almost the last day she could do so. She had money enough left to pay one more week on her rent, buy food, and have a bit left over for bus fare home.

"I wonder how much they are asking for Billiken," she thought. "I'd like to take him back with me. He reminds me of all the good times I had as a child at Aunt Minnie's. It won't cost me anything to go in and inquire." She pushed open the door and went in.

The shop was larger than it appeared from the outside. A room at one side was entirely devoted to books. There were several comfortable chairs in this room and in one sat a well-dressed elderly gentleman so engrossed in the book he was reading that he did not even glance up when Candace entered. In the main room ancient glassware, china, furniture, and other bits of antiquity were artistically displayed. She looked at the price tags with dismay; but before she could beat a hasty retreat, a tall, nice-looking man came through a rear doorway.

"Hello, I'm Philip Kingsley, proprietor of this shop," he said. "How may I help you?"

Candace was a bit disconcerted because of the prices, but mustered up enough courage to inquire. "I am interested in the funny little Billiken in the corner of the front window. How much do you want for it?"

It was Philip's turn to hesitate. He said, "I'm sorry, but the Billiken is not for sale. I put him there to fill a vacant spot made when another object was sold out of the window. When I have time to redecorate the showcase, I shall remove him. He belongs in our family."

"If he belongs to you," Candace asked, "then where is the rest of him?"

"The rest of him? What do you mean?"

Candace was indignant. "Surely you must know that a Billiken sits on a

throne. The one that used to be on my Great-Aunt Minnie's mantelpiece had a nice seat with a pointed top and some words around the base."

"Did you say, 'Great-Aunt Minnie'?" Philip seemed surprised. "That was the name of my great-aunt, the one who gave me the Billiken. Isn't it odd that we should each have a Great-Aunt Minnie who owned such a figurine?"

Candy explained, "My Great-Aunt Minnie was really not a blood relative at all. She was married to Grandmother's brother whose name was Rogers. I loved her very much and, when I was small, I spent a great deal of time at her house."

"Shades of Mr. Billiken!" Philip exclaimed. "Then we are family, or nearly so. Your Great-Aunt Minnie and my Great-Aunt Minnie are one and the same. You were probably away when my family was near enough for me to visit her. How else could it be that we never met? The Billiken in the window is the very one you remember."

Despite her amazement at these revelations, Candy still wanted to know where the throne was.

"It must be around here somewhere. Let's look." Philip led the way into the rather cluttered storeroom at the back, but they could not find the missing throne. As they searched, Candy told Philip about her aspirations and dreams of a fling on the stage, and Philip told her how he had developed his antique business. They began to reminisce, telling each other half-forgotten anecdotes about Great-Aunt Minnie and Great-Uncle Frank.

"Did Great-Aunt Minnie ever sing the Billiken song to you?" asked Candy.

"That I can't recall," said Philip. "Sing a little of it to me and see if I remember it." So Candy softly sang:

"Mr. Billiken, there you sit & grin,  
Looking calm and wise.

All the silly men ask you now and then

What you would advise.

Will I find my dear?

Will it be this year?

Will good luck begin?

Though I'm sure you know

You will not say so,

Mr. Billiken!"

Both Candy and Philip laughed happily as Philip admitted that he did recall the song. They had com-

pletely forgotten the man in the book room until, suddenly, they looked up and he stood before them.

"Young lady," he demanded, "Was that you who sang that song?"

"Yes sir," answered Candace. "It was. I was just singing a nursery song remembered from childhood. I am very sorry if I disturbed you."

"You need not apologize," said the gentleman, handing her a business card. "My name is William A. Wilbur. At the moment there is a small singing part to be filled in an operetta I am producing. Would you care to audition for it?"

The young people were astonished. Neither had recognized Mr. Wilbur, although he was a very well-known personality in the city. Right then and there Candy made an appointment to try out for the part, and this time good luck found her. She got it and acquitted herself very well in every performance.

Philip was glad she had gotten the job, too, but for a very different reason. If Candy did not have to go home, they would have a better opportunity to get better acquainted. Besides

showing her many places in the city that she had never seen, Philip always managed to have time to spend in the shop with her. One day, hidden away among other pieces of bric-a-brac, they found the missing throne.

I must confess that Candy's excursion into the world of the theatre was not of very long duration. But that was all right. She and Philip decided that another and more important career awaited her as his wife.

Mr. Billiken, grinning from ear to ear, now reigns over a happy household. He sits complacently on the mantle, ensconced on his throne, which bears around the base his title: GOD OF THINGS AS THEY OUGHT TO BE.



*Mrs. Chase lives in Sweden, Maine, where she writes poetry like that published in her book (November Violets, published by Quill Press) and fiction as well. The illustration for this story was done by her granddaughter, Donna Chase, of South Waterford.*

## AYAH—A Friendly Tip From The Folks Who Know . . .

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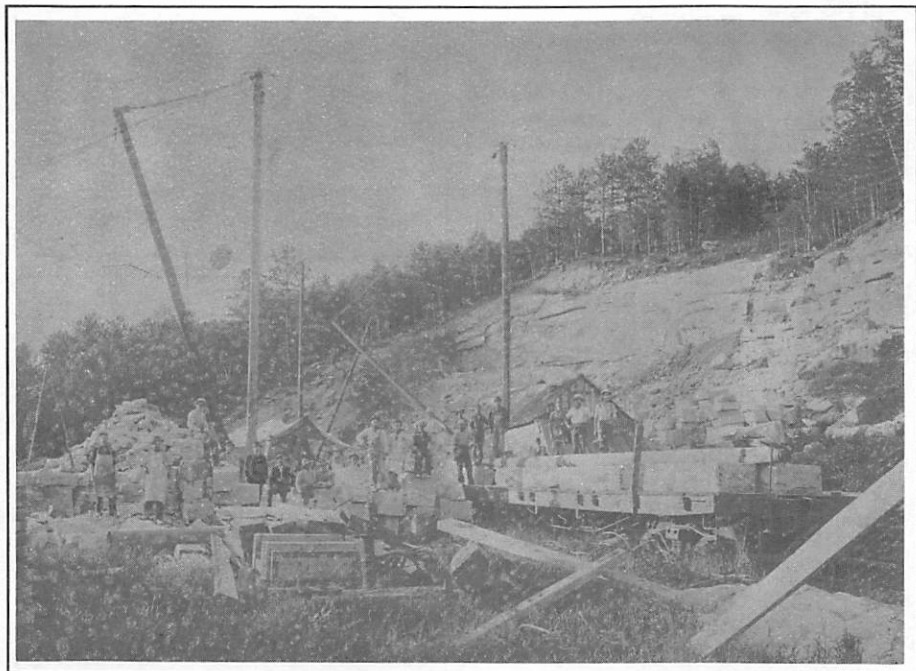
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## From Bryant Pond's Quarry . . .



## MEMORIES GRAND

It was just before the turn of the century that I was born into my small world at the top of Merryfield Hill, one mile from Bryant Pond Village. I was one of the seven Perley Wilson children.

The family made a world of its own, having little contact with the outside world. Radio and television were not yet invented, the old Edison phonographs were just coming on the market, and we had no telephone. Once a day we looked forward to the coming of the mail, of which we had little; but sometimes there was a letter from a friend or relative. Twice a year we received the Sears, Roebuck catalogue—and that was a big day.

Important to our family and to our town was the Grand Trunk Railroad, its little station, and the three trains a day. There was an early morning train at 5:18, with its pullman cars and sleepers; another at 9:18 a.m. going to Portland; and the up train with the mail at 4:08 in the afternoon.

It was only a one-mile walk to the village, which we children took frequently. Trips to the stores were often timed so that we could be at the station to watch the train come in. It was exciting to see it appear around

the curve, with the great column of smoke following it like a waving banner, to hear its whistle, to feel the vibrations under our feet as it approached the station, and to hear the hissing of the brakes as it came to a stop.

There were always many cans of milk to be loaded, There were the mail sacks and sometimes a few passengers to board the train. Since it was a water station, there was always plenty of time for departing passengers to say their farewells. But it was more exciting to see what the train brought—the mail, the express packages; and then there might be people we knew arriving, or even interesting strangers.

Young people of today cannot imagine how the arrival and departure of a train could be exciting, but it was our link with the great outside world of which we knew so little. Old Major, our work horse, was seldom harnessed to the two-seater wagon for the trip to the other side of town to visit friends or relatives, so our only transportation was usually our two feet. Our world had a radius of approximately five miles until we were old enough to go by train to South Paris or Norway.

A train trip to South Paris was a bigger event than is a trip to Boston now, or even a flight to Florida. The news boy with his papers and magazines; then his trip through the car with his basket, calling out: "Ham, cheese, and chicken sandwiches;" then the first and second calls to breakfast in the dining car at the rear were all a part of a new world to us. When we neared our destination, and the brakeman came through calling out, "Next station South Paris, change for Norway," our hearts beat a little faster. Arriving in South Paris then was as exciting as it would be today to arrive in Paris, France.

Probably, even now, the most exciting memories of the old Grand Trunk Railroad center around the stone quarry. It was in operation only intermittently—but whenever there was work, Father was there. On at least two jobs he was foreman.

I can remember the summer of 1911 when, as foreman, he spent many long hours around the dining room table drawing diagrams for the next day's work. After poring over the blueprints, he drew a diagram for each stone to be cut, with its exact dimensions and the finish each face of the stone must have. The finished stones, of course, were shipped by rail to be assembled into a bridge or a building.

The most interesting job Father ever had was the building of the Grand Trunk Terminal station in Portland. I have no recollections of that for it was built in 1903 and I was still exploring life within the walls of home, but Father sometimes told us about it.

## . . . To Portland's Station

# OF THE TRUNK

by Myrtle Wilson Weeks

Years later when I went away, first to school, then to teach, my only transportation for many years was by rail. I spent many hours in the Grand Trunk Station. Part of my journey had to be taken on the Boston and Maine Railroad, which necessitated crossing Portland by trolley to the Union Station. On my way home I always waited at the Grand Trunk station to complete my journey. I thought it the most beautiful building in the world. As I later travelled farther and became somewhat acquainted with Union Station, and later with Grand Central Station, it did look small to me, but I still thought it the most beautiful of all stations.

When I learned it had been torn down, I felt that one object of my most cherished memories had been cruelly and needlessly destroyed. I still believe it was a great loss to the city of Portland and the state of Maine.

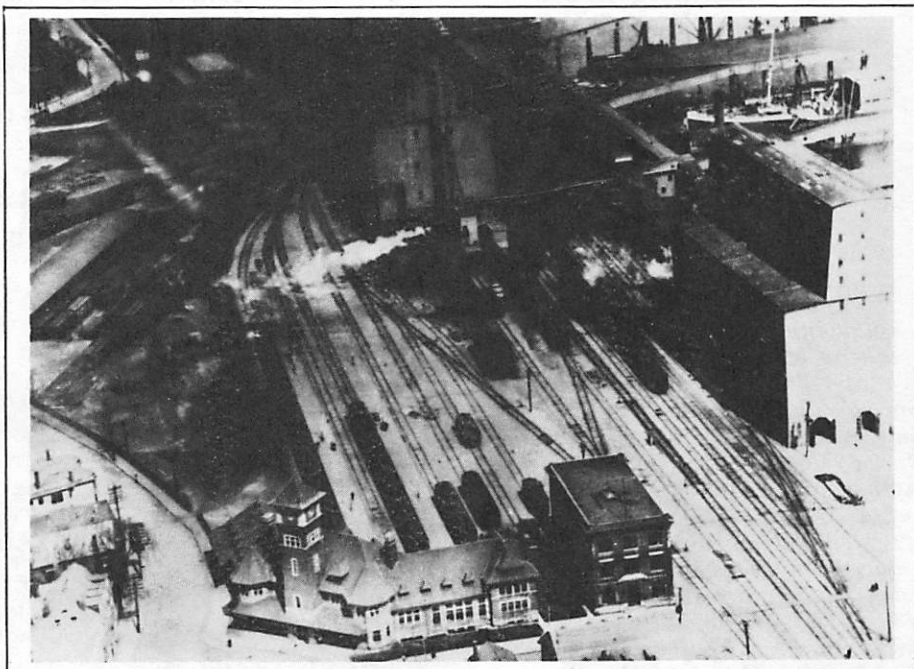
There was an interesting little incident that Father told us occurred while the building was being erected, and we still sometimes talk about it in the family with a feeling of pride.

Those who had seen the building will remember that there were many arches; inside, over the windows, and outside, between several marble columns. The builders notified Father that there was one stone in each arch that did not fit and could not be used.

Father sent back the message: "The stones will fit if you put them in right."

He received a prompt reply: "If you can make them fit, come and put them in."

The next morning, Father boarded the 9:18 train and he came back home



on the 4:08. I don't know how long it took him to teach them how to put the stones in, or how many were done before he came home, but the stones fitted and there were no more complaints.

My sister Pearl and brother Ben went a few times with Father by train to the quarry on a pass to spend the day. They felt Father must be a very important man to take them and travel by train on a pass. And such an exciting day it was! The attention the workmen gave them; the rough stones being transformed into works of art; watching Father at work with the men, and their respect for him—it was more than exciting. It was thrilling.

Only one picture of the quarry did we ever have, and that is now faded and indistinct. At that time, only photographers had cameras and pictures were scarce. We know that in the picture were Perley Wilson, Fred Thurlow, Tom Green, Ed Thompson, Wig (William) Howe, Ed Cole, Floyd Morgan, and Albert Prince (the blacksmith and tool sharpener), and about that many more whom we cannot identify. Names of others we know worked with Father later were John

Powers, Steve Libby, and Perle Wing.

It may be of interest to some younger readers of this article to know why the Canadian railroad would go through a portion of Maine to Portland instead of to a Canadian port.

We were told that a large part of the freight on the Grand Trunk was long train-loads of wheat from the wheat fields of central and western Canada to be shipped to Europe. Canada has no eastern seaport that is free from ice and navigable all winter all years. The wheat trains ran all winter, and perhaps more. That I do not know.

The wheat was unloaded from the freight cars to great buildings called elevators, where it was stored until loaded on ships bound for Europe. We were told that the elevators did not belong to the railroad, but were leased for 99 years.

As we look back on our childhood, we still think we were among the fortunate ones of Woodstock to have lived within walking distance of the Grand Trunk Railroad.

*The quarry picture is from Mrs. Weeks' family. The Portland Terminal photos were graciously lent by the Grand Trunk Archives.*



# Readers' Room:

She dressed in white for cleaning her hearths. She took visitors on a guided tour of the roof. She disappeared through doors and came back in through closets. Her rooms and her conversations rambled upstairs and down. She was the eccentric Minnie Plummer Stephens, West Paris born widow of C. A. Stephens. Read this true tale of a visit with the widow one summer day in 1936:

## AFTERNOON TEA AT THE LABORATORY

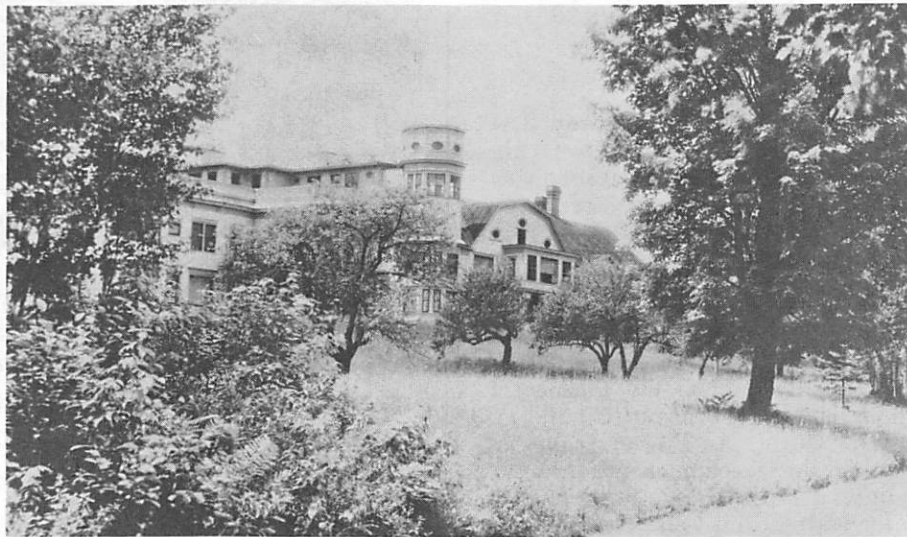
A Visit With Mrs. C. A. Stephens

by Conrad Wright

*Following the death of Dr. C. A. Stephens, Mrs. Stephens continued to live at "The Laboratory," on the Norway Lake Road. In the summer-time, she often worshipped at the Norway Center Church, and there my mother engaged in conversation with her. An invitation to call was readily accepted. The account of the visit reproduced below was jotted down at the time, when impressions were still fresh. Those who called at "The Laboratory" on that occasion were Professor C.H.C. Wright, Mrs. Wright, and their three sons, Walter, Conrad, and Brooks, who ranged in age from twenty-one to fourteen.*

About 1925 or 1926, Father subscribed to the *Youth's Companion* for us. At that time, the paper was still a weekly; soon afterward it became a monthly, and then was taken over by the *American Boy*. Of all the features of the magazine, we read with greatest interest the sketches by Dr. C. A. Stephens of his boyhood life in Norway, Maine. For more than fifty years, Dr. Stephens wrote regularly for the paper; and at one time he had to invent several pen names so that not more than one article in each issue would appear under his own name. He took his medical degree at Boston University at the request of the publishers of the *Companion*, who were looking for someone qualified to write a series of health articles that they proposed to run.

Dr. Stephens' huge house, about three miles from Norway village on the Waterford road, with its many turrets and verandas, was well known to us. But, curiously enough, we never thought to visit the Doctor when he was alive. He seemed almost an historical figure, for his sketches pic-



*The Laboratory as it stood near Norway Lake until the 1950's*

tured life on his grandfather's farm in the 1860's. But, in the summer of 1936, Mother happened to fall into conversation with his widow, Minnie Plummer Stephens (who gave up her opera career as "Mlle. Scalar" to marry him), and she urged us to call.

The visitor who drove up to the house may at first have gotten the impression that it was unoccupied, for many of the windowshades were kept drawn. That is what we thought at first. And we believed our suspicions were correct when we found the front doorsteps all covered with newspapers, held down by fragments of rose quartz and other rocks. But a touch on the bell brought a Finnish hired girl who, in somewhat foreign English, explained that Mrs. Stephens was in, and that the papers were on the steps because the man was painting the roof.

Mrs. Stephens appeared, and welcomed us most effusively. We stepped into the hall, a dark and gloomy room

with a fireplace on one side and varnished wood panelling around the walls. Turning left, we entered the drawing room: more varnished wood panelling, another fireplace (this time in the corner), many books in oak bookcases, and a glimpse into the dining room.

The doctor's widow was a woman in her sixties. She was of medium height. A grey streak showed in her hair, but for the most part it was still a dirty yellow color. She was dressed quite in white: elk-skin moccasins, white cotton stockings, and white dress. She wore strong glasses, set in tortoise-shell frames. We heard from her how the doctor happened to build the house, and why he called it "The Laboratory." He had always been interested in the problem of life and wanted to find the cell of old age. So, after the old farm house burned down, he bought property nearer the village, and planned a laboratory. By degrees

Page 24.

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he constructed the house. Here he was planning to bring fifty doctors to work on the problem. Tucked away in odd corners throughout the incredible structure were suites of rooms for the doctors to occupy. A friend of his had been interested in the project and planned to provide money for it; but ironically he died suddenly, asphyxiated by mistake as he slept, and the money went by a previous will in trust to "the Bowdoin College University." Dr. Stephens was heartbroken, and not even the arrival of "Minne Sclar" from Europe at about that time could wholly console him.

In that room, we also heard profuse apologies for her appearance, for we had surprised her in the act of cleaning up the hearths. As the room was very chilly, she asked us to come upstairs where it was warmer. We passed through the hall, were briefly shown the breakfast room across from the drawing room, and went up about a half-a-dozen steps. An attempt to illuminate this dark corner failed, for the electric lights proved to be out of order. We went through a doorway, then up some more steps. We found ourselves in another sort of hallway. At the right was a music room.

"Here is where Dr. Stephens had his swimming pool," the widow said.

It was a large room, perhaps fifteen by twenty-five yards. Eight or ten pillars were necessary to support the ceiling. A small fireplace at one side, with a hammock hanging in front of it from the high-studded ceiling appeared to be the only means of heating it. Two sides of the room opened out of doors, with wooden shutters in half-a-dozen sections to cover each window. These shutters were open according to no regular system, and let in blotches of light. Tables all around were piled high with magazines: one was covered with *Scientific Americans* dating back to prehistoric times; another with *Atlantic Monthlys*, and so on. Two grand pianos seemed very inconspicuous in so large a room.

"He found that it steamed up the room, so he had to have it removed."

We inquired whether the water was pumped up from the lake.

"Oh no, he had wells all around," she told us. "But it ought to have been pumped because, you know, wells will

go dry. When I came to live here, we made it into a music room. There is something of an echo, but we were going to have tapestries hung around, and a pipe organ in the far corner. But then the war came."

We retreated from the music room and, passing through the hall, entered a room set off by glass partitions, overlooking the lake and the road. From within that room, three steps led up to another room, also partitioned off with glass, where the doctor had been accustomed to do much of his work. A microscope stood under a glass bell. Of later years, he had done his writing at a table, still as he kept it, in the lower room. A palm tree stood nearby, and a pillar formed the support for a circular staircase leading up into one of the turrets.

The visitors sat down, the cushions being removed from the chair normally occupied by Mrs. Stephens' mother, in order to make room. Much more conversation about the doctor followed: "He was a charmer, in every way a charmer." We heard, too, about various family retainers. One was George, who had built most of the house, under the doctor's direction. When no construction was in progress, he had occupied his time by making a great part of the furniture. His work was substantial and expertly done, although of a decidedly original design. When Mrs. Stephens first came to live there, she was naturally rather ebullient with her plans for this and that. George, who had apparently had some experience with bossy women-folk, decided that he could never get along with the new mistress. So he announced that, after that year, he would not be working for the doctor any more. Dr. Stephens asked him at least to finish the new apartments in the latest addition. Nothing more had to be said: George remained.

"He was the latest I laid away, a year after the doctor."

Likewise we heard about Mrs. Cox, who had been so cordial to Mother when she and Brooks went to the Norway Center Congregational Church. Mrs. Cox had turned around in the pew and said, "Ought I to know you?"

"No, but I wish you did," Mother had said.

"Yes," said Mrs. Stephens. "Mrs. Cox told me about it for an hour!"

Conversation turned to the huge fireplace, large enough to burn cordwood with feet to spare. It was boarded up, we were told, because in summer it was impossible to keep chimney swifts out and they defiled it, attracting flies. Mrs. Stephens apologized for her shoes, thereby calling attention to them. Next the conversation turned to the Memorial Edition of the works of the late doctor, and several of the stories were recited, in slightly abridged form.

Our family was on the point of saying our adieux and leaving when it was invited to go up on the roof. We crossed the hall and the music room, went up a half-a-dozen steps and along a balcony overlooking the music room; up more steps, and back along a passageway a foot wide; then into a room where the retainer had his paints spread out, and onto the roof. The day was overcast, but the sun shone between clouds. A glimpse of the lake showed between trees, and we heard for the second and third time how it had been necessary to cut out twenty-five trees, and how grieved everyone had been. More would have to go. Dr. Stephens had at one time planted two thousand pines, which were pointed out. They had reached the age when the lower limbs were unsightly so a protecting row of smaller trees had been set out in front. We were also shown the site of the tennis courts—the Stephenses had been very fond of that game.

After a fruitless attempt to identify our own house, which in truth was hidden by a ridge of hills, we retraced our steps downstairs. On the balcony we hesitated once more, and were about to take leave.

"Oh, but you haven't seen the boudoir!"

If there was anything more to see, we were glad to see it, so Mrs. Stephens disappeared through a door leading into a disorderly closet, and reappeared at another door which had been locked from within. We entered the boudoir. Another grand piano filled one corner. Tables all around were covered with books and magazines. We were urged to sit down, despite our protests.

"Oh, but we haven't talked on this level yet."

So the conversation went on. When we arrived, Mother had introduced



## Potpourri

### Gardening Tips by Margaret Harriman

What gardener among us has not been poring through the newest seed catalogs, dreaming of colorful flower beds and lush cantelopes, picturing bountiful crops and dreaming dreams of the loveliest garden ever? Especially on those long, seemingly endless bleak days of a cold, snow-to-the-roof-tops winter?

Well, fellow gardeners, if perchance you haven't planned your garden yet, nor ordered your seeds, now is the time to do so. If you wait too long, the old stand-by varieties will be gone, as well as most of the newest ones, and you'll have to settle for what-have-you. This sometimes makes for an interesting, but disappointing garden. I like to try at least one new variety each year, but being the stubborn Yankee that I am, I always have the old reliable ones, too.

Now's the time to get those leggy, bedraggled house plants out and give them a haircut. Take new cuttings, rooting either in vermiculite or a glass of water, ready to set outside if warm weather ever really gets here.

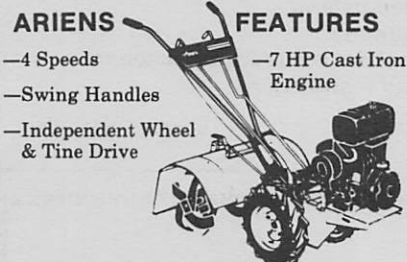
I seem to be a bit pessimistic this year—and look forward so much to seeing the robins. I did see a flock of wild geese the other day, so spring must be approaching. All the houseplants are putting forth new shoots and blossoms here and there.

Back to the seed catalogs and your garden: it's a good idea to have a plan ready, allotting space. Make a chart of the rows, planning for a succession of crops, wasting no space and knowing where everything is to be planted. That way it's easier to tell the little carrots and peas from the weeds.

My only advice as to what seed company to buy from would be that most all of them are reliable. I would, however, beware of bargains and not rely on those half-used packets stored in the cellar or pantry last year. If you have saved seeds from past years and hope to use them this spring, try a germination test a week or two before



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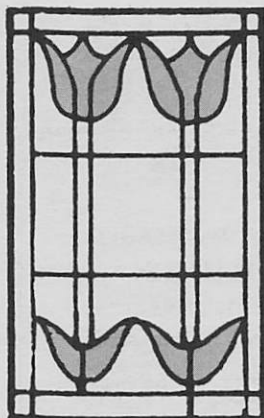
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**Deadline: June 1, 1982**

Entries cannot be returned.

time for planting. To do this, count out ten seeds, place them between a layer of paper towels. Keep the towels moist and warm for a few days, then check the seeds. If 8 of the 10 have sprouted, then you have an 80% germination rate, which is good. If it's much less than that—50 to 60%—throw them away and buy new ones.

Whichever company you choose, it's worth it to pay a little more for quality seed. Gardening is far too much work to have a sparse row of disappointing quality.

Well, folks, I'll write more next month. I'm going in now for a spot of tea, and daydream of glorious petunias, juicy red tomatoes, and cheerful pansy faces as I look through my latest spring seed catalog.

Mrs. Harriman owns and operates Little Ossipee Florist and Greenhouse in Limerick. In addition to caring for her husband, Peter and eleven children, she teaches classes in floral design, chairs the flower committee for the Acton Fair yearly flower show, and speaks at many groups and classes. She is beginning a regular column for BitterSweet.

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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Texas 7:05 p.m.	Minnesota 8:35 p.m.	Minnesota 8:35 p.m.	Minnesota 8:35 p.m.	K.C. 8:35 p.m.	K.C. 8:35 p.m.	K.C. 8:35 p.m.
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
K.C. 2:35 p.m.	Seattle 7:35 p.m.	Seattle 7:35 p.m.	Seattle 7:35 p.m.	Seattle 7:35 p.m.	Oakland 2:28 p.m.	Oakland 2:28 p.m.
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Oakland 2:05 p.m.	California 7:35 p.m.	California 7:35 p.m.	Seattle 10:35 p.m.	Seattle 10:35 p.m.	Seattle 10:35 p.m.	Seattle 10:35 p.m.
30	31					
Seattle 10:05 p.m.	Oakland 8:10 p.m.					

Home game  
Away game

... Page 24 The Laboratory  
her first son, Walter, and so on; Mrs. Stephens continued to call us First Son, Second Son, Third Son. When we reached the second floor, she substituted a principle she had observed at the South Paris Inn, where the rooms were not numbered, but called, according to their color schemes, Orchid, Peach, and the like. But now, in the boudoir, it was decided that Orchid was not a satisfactory name, so fruits were substituted: Apple, Peach, and Plum. Much to the professor's dismay, Mrs. Stephens tried to pin Tangerine on him. Fig was rejected as too laxative. Mother was tagged Grape, because she was assumed to be a clinging vine. And the names persisted.

Mrs. Stephens, from her perch on the radiator, now thought it would be nice if she could give us some tea, or at least some cake. Finally, we consented to have some cake, as she was very persistent.

"But it's not very good cake. It's not frosted."

Plum (Brooks) suggested that some cakes are better unfrosted, but Mrs. Stephens said she had never seen one. She thought, after all, that we had better have tea; and Mother consented, not realizing that it was six o'clock. Mrs. Stephens insisted that the water was always boiling. The hostess then disappeared by the main door, only to reappear at once by a different door to ask how we wanted it. Each guest gave an order and Plum averred that he did not take tea, so milk was suggested for him instead. Then Mrs. Stephens disappeared once more, and the guests picked up the books and magazines they had hastily taken up a minute before.

After finishing the books and magazines, the guests looked at the pictures, then out the windows. The whole house was silent. Then a whirring noise was heard for a few minutes downstairs. The delay became embarrassing. Apple suggested that the widow had lost her way. Peach thought there must be foul play, or else a plot was being hatched. He tried to look across to the other wing, to see if she were calmly reading the evening paper.

After some time, Mrs. Stephens reappeared through the closet. She announced that she had changed her mind and that we were to take tea

in the music room instead of the boudoir. We filed out and downstairs, into the large hall, lit now by the long rays of the late afternoon sun. Tea things were neatly arranged on a table, but Plum's milk was missing, so the widow disappeared to search for it. Meanwhile Grape arranged the cups and spoons, while Peach glanced at a copy of the doctor's work on eternal life, titled *Natural Salvation*, which lay on one of the tables. Mrs. Stephens returned, fished ginger out of a ginger-jar, and began cutting it up. Finally she served the tea, which was very strong, and divided up the cake—both the loaf that had been in the house and one that had obviously been freshly obtained from the village.

Then the conversation, which had dragged occasionally during the first two and a half hours, took on a new lease on life. Mrs. Stephens discovered that the professor taught French literature at Harvard. She asked him if he didn't like French literature—parts of it—and he allowed that he did. She said that Corneille and Moliere were old friends of hers, and she related stories of her acquaintanceship with French actors. But before she could get too much involved in this subject, the family decided that it was best to leave, which they accordingly did, cheered by many injunctions to come again.

But they never did.

*This recollection was sent to us by Conrad Wright from Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

#### DO YOU REMEMBER THE LABORATORY?

*BitterSweet knows that there must be many out there who either remember the Stephenses or some tale about their fantastic rambling "cottage" by Norway Lake. We wonder where the furniture and parts of the building went when it was torn down late in the 1950's. If you have a memory or a piece of memorabilia about Norway's famous son and his eccentricities, we invite you to share them with our readers. Do you remember C. A. Stephens, Minnie Plummer Stephens, or the Laboratory? Write to BitterSweet at P. O. Box 6, Norway, ME 04268, and*

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Scoop up yawning balls of fur;  
put them out; lock the door.  
Time to go to bed.

"They'll phss-t and fight,  
and scratch and bite  
there on the porch, you know."  
I know.

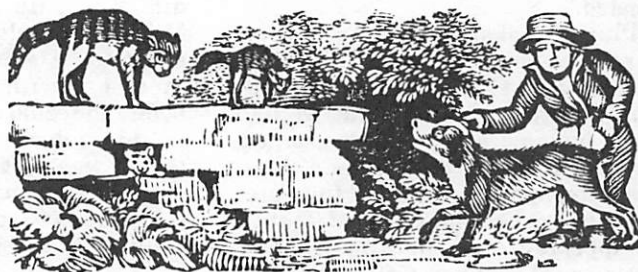
(And waken me at midnight.  
'Tis always so.  
Then I rise and stare,  
glare and glower;  
sleep gone in an hour.  
O miserable cats!

Hear her love song snore.)  
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## A CAT

A cat  
walks gingerly  
jumps broadly  
stalks silently  
sits stately  
licks roughly  
rolls smugly  
scratches sharply  
stares intently  
meows wantonly  
snuggles softly  
purrs

*JoAnne Zywna Kerr*  
*Weld*



## OUR BABY GIRL

A Baby came to our house on the twenty second of May.  
Mother, Daddy, and brother were so happy on that day.  
With black hair and blue eues, her face so sweet and round,  
She was just what we ordered, and weighed about ten pound.

Soon she walked all around, played and talked and sang.  
She went to Sunday School and Church before the last bell rang.  
She washed and dressed her dolls and played horsey with her  
brother.

She was sunshine in our home, and she loved to help her mother.

The years passed so swiftly by, and she was all elated  
For one lovely day in June from high school she graduated.  
Oh yes, she got married, and had five dolls to dress.  
She takes them to Sunday School and Church where God does  
meet and bless.

She is still a jolly, laughing girl, a real mother in her home,  
With a love to help others, and not live her life alone.  
The twenty-second of May, 1945, we love her more and more.  
She is still our baby girl and sister, Happy Birthday to her, only 34.

*Her mother,*  
*Blanche Herriman*

## SEATED ONE DAY AT THE ORGAN

The old song says, "I was weary and ill at ease; and my fingers wandered idly over the noisy keys." This was all too true—I was not weary but certainly ill at ease and my fingers and feet were apt to stray from their assigned places.

My organ experiences started in early childhood. We were brought up on hymns and, lacking radio, television or hi-fi, we made our own music with a pump organ and part-singing. As my sisters and I became old enough to reach the pump, we took lessons. As soon as we could read well enough, our father started us in to play in the small country church. He led the congregational singing and often tried to cover our mistakes with his fine tenor voice.

Well do I remember that organ stool. It was upholstered with black, shibby horsehair—and it was slippery. I usually wore a stiff organdy dress—also slippery. Both these things added to my nervousness, since I was not only afraid of making discords, but also afraid of sliding off the stool. Later we moved to a larger village and the church there had a pipe organ which I longed to learn to play. The organist was not so young so it seemed a good idea for me to learn to fill in for her, at least for Sunday School. So she taught me, à la Arthur Murray, in a hurry! I was allowed to practice after school and often stayed until nearly dark, much to my mother's distress.

I sometimes got carried away with all that power under my hands and feet and played *Onward Christian Soldiers* so loud that it shook the church and even the house next door. I also learned to play *Softly and Tenderly*. Once in a while I got to play for a church service with fair results.

Time went on and one year my niece was to be married in a church in the next town. She wanted me to play for her wedding. I finally agreed to do this in spite of my fear. The regular organist came to show me about the organ and its peculiarities—they all have them. This one was fine unless for some reason the swell pedal was pushed in too far—then the power would shut off. I asked her how far

was too far. She said she wasn't sure herself.

The day of the wedding dawned bright and fair, and I arrived with all the usual music to play before the ceremony. This organ faced the audience, which was very disconcerting. I played on, and on, and on, as the soloist was late—very late. The assembled friends and relatives had no way of knowing what was causing the delay. Neither did I, only I could see the ushers in the rear signal me to keep on. I did, repeating all the music I had with me. At one point, I seriously considered asking the group to sing along. Eventually the soloist appeared behind me, having been brought in the back door and through the furnace room. She sang the song *Because* as rehearsed, and with great relief I could play *The Wedding March* at last. After the beautiful ceremony, Mendelssohn and I got the wedding party down the aisle again, and I went home to take aspirin.

My next organ episode was a prime example that idiots rush in where wiser people fear to tread. I was asked to play for a month to substitute for a real organist who had a heart condition, and for the regular substitute, who was in the last stages of pregnancy. I agreed to try it.

This organ was a real challenge—the largest and most complex of any I had ever tried to play. It had many stops and gadgets that I knew not of, and I avoided them like the plague. I also was supposed to direct a choir. This was a mixed quartet. At the time, all I knew about choir direction or mixed quartets was that there were soprano and alto females, bass and tenor males. I threw myself on their mercy and only begged that they "sing something simple" and I'd do my best to play it. They were very kind and experienced vocalists and we had few problems. The tenor sometimes strayed a bit—vocally, I mean—and required a firm note to bring him back on key. I lasted out the month and even got to enjoy the sermons.

I was away from home for several years after this and had learned not to mention my organ playing, so no one knew about it and I thus avoided any more episodes—until one summer while home on vacation. A friend, the organist in a nearby town, broke her leg on Saturday, and before

I knew it I had agreed to play for her on Sunday. This with a strange organ and no time to practice.

This organ was fairly simple and all would have been well, or at least better, if my legs had been longer. The bench was too far back for me as her legs, when intact, were longer than mine. Also the mirror, which is always placed above the organ to enable the one at the keys to see the audience, was much too high for me. To be able to see into it, I had to slide forward on the bench, which then tipped alarmingly. There was a screen which shielded me from view, which was a fine thing under the circumstances—especially as I had forgotten to bring flat-heeled shoes. Since heels catch on the pedals and nylons are too slippery, I played not *Barefoot In The Park*, but in the organ loft. Other minor hazards were Communion and an adult baptism. Since I couldn't see what was going on, the minister very kindly signalled when he wanted softer music.

When that service was finally finished, I gathered up my shoes, nylons, and music and sat in my car for at least five minutes before I dared to drive it home. After that day I gave away all my organ music, lest I be tempted again. As far as I'm concerned, *The Lost Chord* is still among the missing, and I have ceased to search for it.

Ella Smith  
Norway



## THE FIRST SIX WEEKS

Our house up for sale, jobs resigned, children in tow, it was good-bye New Jersey and hello Harrison, Maine. With some nervousness and much enthusiasm, we were beginning a new phase of life as owners of Camp Bendo and Snowbird Lodge.

Summer camp does not start until the end of June and our early arrival on April 9th, we thought, would give us plenty of time to get things in tip-top shape.

We should have interpreted the happening of our second night here as an omen of things to come. Perhaps our dream of life in Maine could be seen like a balloon up in the air—within grasp, but troubled by a



few pin holes here and there that require constant, delicate patching.

It began with the dogs. We were jostled out of our quiet relaxation by fierce, continual barking. We assumed some harmless woods creature had gotten their attention, nothing to worry about but we had better check. In they came, and what a mess they were! Porcupines are not common in New Jersey and their first encounter with this one must have been a painful surprise. Well, looking at the positive side, we did get to know a vet right away.

Taking a survey of jobs with top priority, we decided painting the cabins and canoes should be first; followed by raking the beach, cutting wood, getting the tennis court in order, etc.—all pleasant tasks and all out-of-doors. I did not keep a journal, but I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say we had rain five out of seven days for the first four weeks. Although I heard rain was badly needed, there is nothing more frustrating than knowing you have so much to do and can't get at it.

Well, somehow, in between the rainy days, we did get things done and loved it. The magnificent scent of the pines, and the sky so high and blue were everything we had dreamed of.

A few more pin holes, such as water pipes broken, a cracked hot water heater, some car problems, and camper applications coming in slowly, all had been patched, patiently, one at a time. Things were looking good!

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Spring was truly here!

Time now to get some flowers planted, more leaves raked, and more painting done. Out we went—tools in hand and songs in heart. But then, what's this? An Alfred Hitchcock movie? The dreaded black flies were instantly all over us. Back in New Jersey it was easy for us to say, "Oh, they can't be that bad, you just have to learn to live with them." Well, they are that bad, but we will learn to live with them. Now when we go out, it is in disguise: sunglasses, kerchief, hat, and plenty of "dope." We may not be "chic," but we can function.

Thus we passed our first six weeks in Maine. Please don't interpret this as an article of complaint. It is not. We have been here a few years now. The good times have far outweighed the bad. The many nice people we have met; our time together, working, reading, or just walking around, are better than we ever fantasized. We will keep grasping for our dream, making patches along the way, because we know it's well worth it. We like it here!

Joan Vandemark  
Harrison

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## MAYBASKETS and MAYFLOWERS

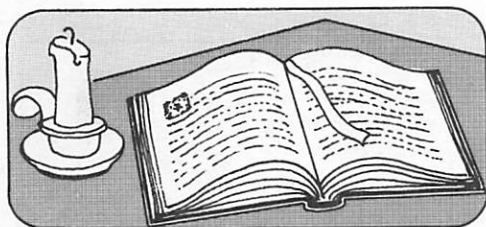
When I was ten (it seems to me in looking back that I was ten for many years) spring meant Maybaskets and Mayflowers. Others might have looked forward to tapping maples or to the first red-winged blackbird; I thought of decorated boxes filled with candy and of the tiny sweet-smelling flowers my French-Canadian mother always was able to find. They were hidden from me until she lifted the leaves to show me just where they were. She, her sisters, and their friends had known that the cold New Brunswick winter was finally over when the Mayflowers appeared.

As I remember, the Maybaskets usually came first. The most important consideration was on whom should be hung the first basket of the year. I'm not sure how the decision was made, but like most playground decisions, I'm sure it was not reached in a democratic fashion. But, the choice was made, decorating completed, the right candy selected, and the first of May anxiously awaited.

Few parents in town would refuse to allow a child out for Maybasket hangings, for it was as much a part of spring as the overflight of the geese. A feeling of liberation infected me as I met my friends to decide upon a strategy for our attack. We, of course, had to wait until twilight before closing in on our goal. Then the basket was hung on the door, the cry "Maybasket" was raised by all, and everyone rushed to escape before the door opened and pursuit began. I remember running through the spring night sure that nothing in life could be more exciting. But, Maybaskets are now a part of the past.

That's the nice thing about Mayflowering. My neighbors would be more than a little surprised now if I pounded on their doors and shouted, but no one seems surprised when I drift into the woods on a warm spring day to hunt for Mayflowers. Like my mother before me, I can find just the right kind of place. I always know by the feel of an area that there are Mayflowers underfoot. Usually I find them in a grove of pines where the ground is springy. I lift the pine needles, and there they are. Spring has come again.

Jean Pottle  
Raymond



## Off The Shelf Book Reviews

by Mark Melnicove

### AFTER THE WAR

by H. R. Coursen  
Heidelberg Graphics  
P. O. Box 3606, Chico, CA 95927  
(\$8.95 paper; \$13.95 cloth;  
188 pages, 1981)

"Now he would ride a machine more powerful than a horse, and thrust that power against an enemy he could see, and who could see him. The thought warmed him deeply. War would bring with it that excitement for which he had waited all these years. He was twenty-two."

Manfred von Richthofen, the infamous Red Baron, grew up just in time for World War I. This was the war in which millions died faceless deaths in the trenches. It was also the war in which the airplane was used for the first time to do battle. Unlike the ground war, the air war was glamorous; though it, too, was fraught with danger. Here, sometimes as much as two miles up, in cockpits open to chilling winds, man fought man in hair-raising duels. Much like the jousting machines of old, it was knight pitted against knight, protected (and made vulnerable) by their armor. Those air fighters were the heroes and superstars of their age, fame coming as the number of enemy aircraft singlehandedly shot down grew. The Red Baron shot down more planes than anyone else and seemed almost invincible; and yet, he, too, met death in the sky. This came at the end of the war, a war that seemed as if it would go on forever.

Herb Coursen, Professor of English at Bowdoin College, has given us a fascinating psychological study of von Richthofen. Like some detective of the soul, and using the convention of the historical novel, Coursen hands us a lucid picture of what it was that drove the Red Baron on. This uncovering of the Red Baron's mind took

quite a bit of research and creative speculation—after all, the man was (and still is) a legend. Details about both his life and death are incomplete and often disputed. He was not the type of man to go around revealing his most private thoughts to others. His survival instinct dictated otherwise. Coursen had to dig.

Like von Richthofen, Coursen, too was a fighter pilot. He flew for the United States, though, and his war was Korea. His admiration for the Red Baron's skills is evident. Much of the book describes the various battles in which the Baron took part. The writing is as exciting and precise as the events being described. Here, for example, Coursen follows the Red Baron in his Fokker plane as he shoots down the then-ace of the British Air Force, Major Hawker (in his DeHavilland):

"The Fokker opened up, raking a line of bullets down the DeHavilland, gnashing the tail section to streaming tatters. The Fokker's pilot pulled past the DeHavilland, rolled over and looked back. No need to finish him off. The British machine fell lazily off on one wing and

went down in a series of moth-like spirals, the pilot's head bouncing from side to side in the cockpit. The DeHavilland banged down flat, bounced, and stopped nose down in a shell-hole. The red Fokker circled once, but the British pilot did not climb from his crumbled craft."

But Coursen is not interested merely in telling a tale of suspense and adventure. We see, right from the



start, that he wants to get at what is was that made von Richthofen who he was. For years, historians have puzzled over *how* the Baron died—from air fire, from ground fire, or from both? Coursen thinks, based on the evidence, that ground fire got him... but that's not where he stops: he's after *why* it was that the Baron died. Specifically, was there some psychological weakness, or tragic flaw in the Baron's personality that caused him to fall?

Coursen's answer to this, although never explicitly stated (it's a novel, remember), is that the Red Baron's ambivalent feelings toward his own sexuality caused him to drive himself toward destruction. Coursen's Baron is celibate, a virgin in fact. Whether or not this is the truth is a matter for conjecture, but Coursen's speculations make sense. Product of a strict Prussian upbringing and earmarked for a military career from birth, the Red Baron never really had the time (or inclination, it seems) to fully







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explore the world of human love. Although we don't feel him to be cold-hearted, it is clear that he always kept a distance, even in his most intimate relationships—those with his mother, his brother Lothar, and his childhood sweetheart, Helga.

It is his relationship with Helga that is essential towards understanding the Baron's mixed-up feelings. Whether or not Helga existed historically is, again, a matter for conjecture. Coursen bases her on a remark made by von Richthofen's mother in 1927. Today, we would call her a tomboy; von Richthofen clearly wishes she had been of the same sex as he, as this passage, written to portray his thoughts, reveals:

"Helga should have been a boy. She was always first to the top of the tallest tree. She never fell. She was first into the coldest waters, still fed from melting mountain snows in April... she should have been a boy. She would now be a pilot in my squadron! He smiled as he scanned the air in ceaseless circles."

Their parents had arranged a marriage between the two of them, but World War I intervened. In one of the more critical scenes in the book (critical for understanding the Baron's psyche), his father, a Major in the German Army, visits him on the front, between battles. His father urges him to take leave and marry Helga. This is the same father who was incapable of ever showing any outward signs of affection towards his sons. Calculating, the Baron puts him off. He cites his need to concentrate fully on the war effort. Helga at this point would be an unnecessary distraction. His father, military man



that he is, seems to understand, though reluctantly.

The Baron knows he's fooling his father. He dreads the end of the war, when he'd have to face up to his decision not to marry Helga. He knows he can't go through with it, and although he never tells her outright she seems to sense it. In his mind he considers her the sister he never had—she's his closest friend and confidante—but his letters to her during the war are businesslike and shallow. The war effort gives him an excuse to act this way, but it is his choice to do so. After the war, he tells himself, after the war I'll figure out why I feel this way about her. Yet, he hopes the war never ends, as if he's afraid of what he'd find out about himself. In this sense, then, we have a man who is escaping himself by "finding" himself (in his work as a fighter pilot). He finds great satisfaction (in a sensual way) in seeking out enemy aircraft and shooting them down. He is the best of the best. But he is terrified

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of loosening the grip of self-control that he has on himself. Ultimately, only death under fire will free him from the burdens of his conscience.

This is the tragedy of the man. Not that he died, but that he died without realizing who he was. He never admits to himself that he is unable to consider any woman, and not just Helga, as a mate and a lover. Coursen steers us toward the only conclusion possible—that the Red Baron is hiding his own homosexuality from himself. For him to admit that he could love another man intimately would destroy everything in his self-conception. He would not consider it proper; in his culture it was taboo, especially for a man of his calibre. The passages in the book when he encounters it directly, such as his feelings for a young flyer in his squadron, and the advances made by one of his superiors toward him, only tend to confuse him, and he shoves the consequences into the background.

But even the Red Baron, a man of iron will, could not keep his demons from surfacing. While recuperating from a head wound, he allows himself to dream for the first time in his life. He never had dreams that he could remember before, no time for them, up at the crack of dawn, into his boots, out into the world of strict discipline and military maneuvers. Yet, he holds his dreams of Helga and a peaceful sky at arm's length. He goes back to war, refusing a promotion to major (that would have taken him off the front lines and out of danger), and is eventually shot down behind enemy lines, "still gripping the stick."

"To the victory of the Fatherland!" is the toast made by von Richthofen's men every time they come back from the battle successful. After so many times, though, it begins to ring hollow, even in von Richthofen's ears. Political reasons for fighting the war have become blurred and lost in the endless rounds of death. Against this backdrop, other reasons for fighting, involving deeper aspects of the individual and collective psyche, emerge. Coursen is to be congratulated for showing us some of these reasons, and not just giving us "another" war story.

*Melnicove is the proprietor of The Dog Ear Press, South Harpswell.*

## You Don't Say

### BROTHERLY LOVE

Jim and Will, Hiram's ancient and profane brothers, maintained bachelor's quarters in two widely separated locations. This situation was not economically sound but there were good and sufficient reasons for its existence. They couldn't get along together over thirty minutes at a time. They disagreed loudly and profanely, stopping just short of physical violence.

Perhaps a contributing factor in this situation was the delight Will took in needling Jim about his association with a certain local maiden lady.

It came about in this manner. Will was talking with the lady one day as they met on the street. She burst out with, "I heard your brother Jim as he was passing my house, whistling. It was beautiful. It sounded like the song of an angel."

Will repeated her words to Jim, adding: "You ought to set your cap for her. I think she likes you. She'd make you a fine woman."

Jim loudly disavowed both desire and intention.

Some time later the good lady engaged Jim and Will to do some yard work around her house. Periodically she would come out and criticize the work, directing most of her comments to Jim. When she returned to the house Will would say: "Whistle, Jimmy, and she will think you are an angel."

Fearing that he might be heard in the house, Jim fumed in silence.

Their final chore was to level up the stone doorstep that the winter frost had displaced. Jim lifted the stone with a pry bar while Will placed flat stones under it. At just the wrong moment the bar slipped to the ground, the softness of which saved them from serious injury, but try as he would, Will couldn't pull them out.

Jim sized up the situation and said, "Now, Goddamn you, Willy, I've got you right where I want you and by the ruling powers I am going to tell you what I think of you!"

And before releasing brother Will, he did.

*Raymond Cotton  
Hiram*



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# Goings On

## FILMS & DISCUSSIONS

**RUMFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY:** Films shown in the Public Room; discussions led by U.M.F. Humanities scholars. **MAY 1 - Barn Burning** by William Faulkner; **MAY 15 - The Displaced Person** by Flannery O'Connor. Saturdays 1-3:30. Free.

## MUSIC

**FARNSWORTH MUSEUM:** Rockland. **MAY 6 - American Choral Music**, Robt. Collier Chorale, Main Gallery, 7:30 p.m. **MAY 23 - Folk Music & Songs**, John Prince & Friends, Main Gallery, 2:30 p.m.

**PORTLAND CHORAL ARTS SOCIETY:** Sun., MAY 23, 3 & 7 p.m. - **Americana III**, best American choral music, incl. Broadway tunes, folk songs, Whitman's poetry. Trinity Episcopal Church, Coyne St. & Forest Ave., Portland.

## ART

**HUPPER GALLERY, HEBRON:** Photographs by Skip Churchill until May 8th. Gallery hrs. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 7:30-9:30 p.m., Sun.-Thurs. when school is in session.

**WESTERN MAINE ART GROUP:** Norway Art Center. **MAY 18-20 - Oxford Hills Students Exhibition.** Hrs. Tues.-Sat. 9 - 5.

## LPL PLUS APL

**JAZZ ON A SUMMER'S DAY:** Filmed at 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, featuring Louis Armstrong, Mahalia Jackson, Chuck Berry, others. Sun. MAY 2, 2 p.m., Twin Cinema, Lewiston. \$2.00.

## ETC.

**THE OLD VILLAGE FAIR:** sponsored by YWCA of Lewiston-Auburn. **MAY 6 & 7, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.,** Lewiston Armory. A replica of a working New England village of the 1830's, featuring exhibits of old-time crafts, school, country store, colonial kitchen. Costumed volunteers.

**MAINE STATE BUILDING & ALL-SOUL'S CHAPEL:** Poland Spring. Open weekends in May 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. National Register of Historic Places - on the grounds of former Poland Spring Resort Hotel.

**HISTORIC PORTLAND DISPLAYS:** At the Public Library, Congress St., May through Oct.

**"WEST SIDE STORY":** Presented by the Portland Players at Thaxter Theatre, So. Portland, MAY 21-23, 28-30; JUNE 4-6 & 11-12.

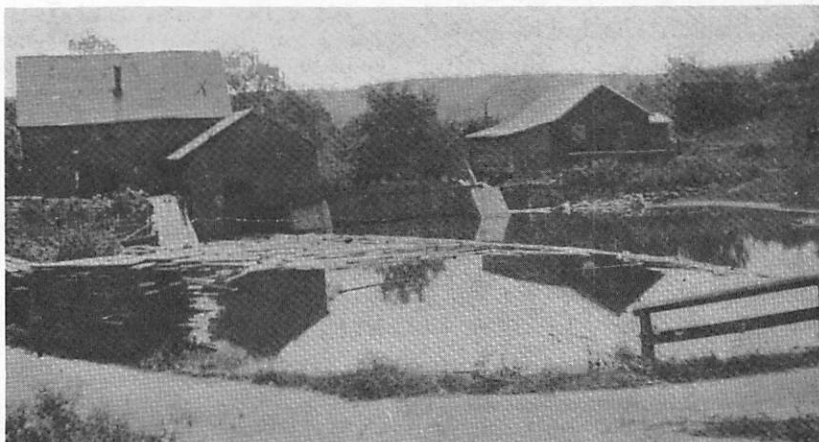
**BRIDGTON ANNUAL ART SHOW:** Town Hall, MAY 29-31.

**MARION McPARTLAND:** First Lady of Jazz at Performing Arts Center, Bath, MAY 22, 8 p.m.

**UPPER DEAD RIVER CANOE RACE:** Eustis, MAY 23.

# Can You Place It?

If you recognize this locality, write us at P. O. Box 6, Norway, ME 04268. The first to identify it will receive a free subscription to BitterSweet.



At press-time, the only answer we received to the **Can You Place It?** question for April was from Brad Keene of Oxford, who wrote that it was: "Western Ave. in South Paris and was taken up by the Court House. The house in the center of the picture is now owned by Frances Gammon. Directly behind her house, on the other side of the tracks, is now where the storage buildings for Paris Farmers Union are located." He's right, and he wins the free subscription. (The picture was taken about 1915, we think.) If you know this month's location, write us at P. O. Box 6, Norway, ME 04268 by May 15th.



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